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THE MASTER'S WATCHWORD

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The Master's Watchword

An Essay

Recalling attention to some Fundamental Principles of the Christian Religion

By the
Rev. Jervis Coats, M.A.

Glasgow
James MacLehose and Sons
Publishers to the University
1897

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To the Memory of
REV. OLIVER FLETT, D.D.

PREFACE

THE purpose of this Essay is to give prominence to some views of truth which the Author believes to have been too often obscured or neglected amid religious controversies.

He does not profess to do more than emphasize and illustrate certain principles which have, in his opinion, a more important bearing on Christian teaching and practice than has been usually assigned to them.

The limited character of the discussion involves certain omissions and imperfections, of which no one can be more keenly conscious than the Author himself. But the publication of this Book has been resolved upon in the hope that it may form a small contribution to a great subject; and that it may help some, as the writer

believes it has helped himself, to reach firmer ethical and theological ground.

The Author's thanks are due to Rev. T. H. Martin, Glasgow, who has kindly assisted in reading the proofs.

GOVAN, *October*, 1897.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THERE is no subject that has excited more difference of opinion amongst men than that which goes by the title of 'The Christian Religion.' A name, as a rule, calls up before the mind a single, distinct, homogeneous image. When it is pronounced, every man agrees with his neighbour on the nature, the outstanding features, the use and value, of the object designated. It is not so with this term. There gathers round it an almost infinite variety of opinions, many of which conflict with one another, some even reaching the length of absolute contradiction. Nowhere is the dust and turmoil of controversy greater than it is here.

These divergencies of view prevail amongst both foes and friends. Regarded from the outside the Christian Religion is spoken of, now in one strain,

now in another. It is, and has always been, harmful to the best interests of humanity, say the more extreme of its opponents. It was helpful in its earlier years, say others; but it is no longer so. It resembles one of those rudimentary organs in the animal frame, which, having performed at one time a useful function, has come to prove an actual hindrance and danger. For centuries, it is affirmed, it has been in conflict with science; it has been "the consistent and determined enemy of human liberty and welfare."

Within the pale of this religion itself there have been, almost from the beginning, varying opinions held as to its several characteristics. Controversies of the most bitter kind,—theological, philosophical, historical, have raged over what have been regarded as its facts and fundamental principles, as well as over the smallest points of its doctrine and practice. What a tangle of irreconcilable theories does the heterogeneous mass of views which has been gathered together, under the common title of 'The Christian Religion,' present to the mind! There are doctrines and rites and practices represented by it, which one class of adherents consider necessary to salvation, but which are regarded as indifferent by another class, and may even be looked upon as obstacles to the development of

its highest and purest form by a third. Much of the time and strength of the ablest men in the Christian Church have been spent in the realm of strife and debate; in attempting to meet views opposed to their own; in seeking to prove that those who held them had no right to the name 'Christian'; or in helping to cast such individuals out of the fold.

It may seem at first sight a vain thing to attempt to discover any great principles, and, above all, to come to rest upon some single governing idea, in a province which can produce such an endless and bewildering diversity of conception and action. And, with the experience of the past before us, it will take a very sanguine mind to expect that should such a basal conception be found, all who profess and call themselves Christians will be prepared to acknowledge it, and range themselves unitedly upon it.

Yet the human mind, constituted as it is, loves to believe in the existence of the one amongst the many, and is ever putting forth fresh efforts to reach it. "Surely," we say, "this confusion cannot lie wholly in the subject itself. There must be in the 'Christian Religion' somewhere a unifying idea, or set of ideas. And this central truth must be clear to some one, if not to man, yet to God."

Then, as we again take up the title, we ask—Was it not manifest to the bright and stainless spirit of Him after whom it is named? Did it not rise sharp and plain before Him, at such a moment as that in which He prayed, "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us?"[1] Did there not present itself to His mind as He uttered this sentiment some one standard around which all who love and serve Him might gather, and, rising above all minor differences, "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"? Nay, was there not a time when, undisturbed by controversy, unperplexed by conflicting speculations, men walked with Him who spake as never man spake? And is it altogether hopeless to aim at attaining to this position to-day?

There is more than an antiquarian, or philosophical, or sentimental interest attaching to such inquiries. It is on the practical exhibition of the unity for which He prays, that Jesus relies for the spread of that faith in Himself which is the great means of human salvation. More than anything else, will the spectacle of a united Christian brotherhood tend to bring the world to the feet of Christ. "That they all may be one . . . that the world

[1] John xvii. 21.

may believe that Thou hast sent Me." Who can tell how much the lamentable sight of a divided and contesting Christendom has conduced to keep back the development of His kingdom?

Seeing that such important issues hang upon this matter, it is no wonder that attempts should be frequently made to discover some centre of unity, or, at least, to throw out suggestions towards a solution of questions as to its existence. If another effort in this direction should be made in this treatise, whilst it may be regarded as only likely to add one more to the already almost countless subjects of controversy, it can be said for it, that it is at least an honest attempt to point to "where beyond these voices there is peace."

Let us glance for a moment at some of the divergent views which have arisen, both without and within the pale of Christianity, to see if we cannot dispose of some of them. With regard to opponents, it may be said that their criticisms are in large part directed against a fictitious or imperfect representation of Christianity. It is difficult to find amongst them any true estimate of Christianity as Christ taught it. It is not what Thackeray calls "Jesus Christ's Christianism" that is reviewed and attacked. It is some travesty of it which has been brought forward by the foe, or

by false, or ignorant, or prejudiced, or inconsistent friend. It is Christianity paganized, catholicized, dogmatized, ritualized. It is Christianity dressed up in dogmas, which may be regarded rather as reflections of the philosophical, political, or social ideas of the age in which they were composed, than as embodiments of the spirit of its Founder; it is Christianity full of priestly assumptions, or carnal dissensions, or hair-splitting theories; or it is Christianity masquerading in the person of the least worthy of its professors—in sensual monk, or power-loving prelate, or bigoted ecclesiastic, or narrow dogmatist, or religious crank.

Take two books, each of which represents a large class of the adversaries of the Faith, and each of which has undertaken, in its own way, to show the evil that Christianity has done in the world — Draper's *Conflict between Religion and Science*, and J. Cotter Morison's *Service of Man*. In neither of these books is the religion of Jesus Christ in question at all. Draper says, "In speaking of Christianity, reference is generally made to the Roman Church, partly because its adherents compose the majority of Christendom, partly because it has commonly sought to enforce these demands by the civil power."[1] And it is the worst

[1] *The Conflict between Religion and Science* (Draper), Intro. x.

and not the best features and practices of this Church that are referred to throughout the story of this conflict, those which are most alien to the free and tolerant mind of Christ, and to His blameless life. Morison, again, has before him, when he speaks of Christianity, the doctrinal aberrations of extreme dogmatists, or the crude views of shallow and short-sighted religionists. His "Ages of Faith" are the lowest periods of a faithless and degraded Church, when its chosen representatives were a spectacle to men and angels, because of their moral excesses.

But it is not with these forms of Christianity that we have to do. They do not represent it, they misrepresent, they caricature it. If you wish to know what Christianity is *not*, you will find this out best, not from those who openly renounce and oppose it, but rather from those doctrines and lives of its supposed representatives, which form the staple of the hostile arguments of its opponents. We are concerned, not with the form of Christianity which Draper attacks throughout his book, but with that of which he seldom speaks, that of which he says on one occasion: "For many years Christianity manifested itself as a system enjoining three things: towards God, veneration; in personal life, purity; in social life,

benevolence"; when it "was a system of benevolence"; when it "made proselytes only by persuasion." It is Christianity before it was invaded by heathenism, secularized by Cæsarism, over-ridden by sacerdotalism, corrupted by pride, wealth, worldliness, luxury; tied and bound by dogmatism and ecclesiasticism. It is the Church as it came into the world, mild and gracious, teaching the gospel of tenderness and love, proclaiming rest to the soul by union with God; not the Church which actually became, through its rivalries and persecutions and strifes, its errors and vices, the scourge and curse of humanity, instead of its blessing. It is the Christianity which sees "no man save Jesus only"; whose cry, is "to me to live is Christ"; which is "determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," with which we have to do.

But this attitude of mind should carry us a long way towards our goal. It would show that many so-called opponents are really on our side. Numbers of those who oppose Christianity attack things which have no vital connection with it; consequently their missiles fall wide of the mark. On the other hand, they support what is of its essence, vying with the believer in sounding the praises of Jesus Christ, extolling His life and teaching, glory-

ing in the patience and self-sacrifice of His Cross.

With regard to the differences which still exist within the pale of what may be spoken of as a purer Christianity, several remarks may be made. Such differences are much exaggerated. They are not comparable, either for number or for virulence, to those which agitated the Church in the early days of Christianity. Nor are they to be compared even with the conflicts which men who have to-day passed middle age saw in their early youth. This change is acknowledged by opponents. "The cessation of religious controversy is a surprising phenomenon. In place of the storm and fury with which polemics formerly filled the air, we have now a great calm. The small sputter of theological disputes, still occasionally heard, is as the explosion of squibs and crackers compared to that of the heavy ordnance in the mighty controversies of old."[1] There is an improvement, on the whole, in the sentiment of Christians towards one another. There has been shown in past days too much of the desire to emphasize comparatively small points of divergence in doctrine and practice, and to see in these reasons why others who professed faith in

[1] *The Service of Man* (J. Cotter Morrison), p. 259.

the same Lord should be denied the name of Christian. There was wont to be exhibited a burning anxiety to make the conditions of entrance into the orthodox Zion so strict, that no one who could not pronounce every letter of its peculiar doctrinal Shibboleth had any chance of entering in.

This attitude was assumed for what appeared to be valid reasons;—jealousy for the truth; the fear lest some doctrine or rite regarded as essential to salvation should not be adequately preserved and avowed; or lest some insidious error might creep in, and lead to mental confusion and trouble, or to spiritual corruption and death. But it has also had a less worthy origin. It has often sprung from want of faith in God the Father, or in man the Christian brother; or from the same kind of meddlesomeness as our Lord rebuked in Peter;[1] or from love of power; sometimes, perhaps, from a spiritual indolence which wished to save the mind the trouble of revising its views—a necessity that would have been laid upon it had it shown itself more hospitable to new truth.

There is being shown to-day a broader, a more catholic, a more Christ-like spirit. Men are

[1] John xxi. 20 ff.

realizing more clearly that "we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth," that "truth, like a torch, the more 'tis shook it shines." They are therefore not so afraid of views which are opposed to their own, nor so eager to shut themselves up in their doctrinal fastnesses lest evil should befall them. The spirit, too, that has helped in such a wonderful way to broaden out the realm of nature is rousing the theological world to look for and welcome the growing light.

There is also a stronger public opinion with regard to matters of vital importance in religion. There is a more general agreement that the outcome of all theology, and of all religion, is the spiritual life. And as the spiritual life is shared by individuals of different religious conceptions, there has never been more of a spirit of fellowship in this spiritual life, which overleaps and disregards religious differences. As Christians read those rare books of devotion which have been left us by men of all sections of the Church, or join in singing the great hymns of Christendom, they feel themselves in an atmosphere in which religious differences do not exist.

With regard to the differences which still remain, let them be sifted with such questions as these:— How many of them arise, not out of the presenta-

tion to the mind of Christianity as Christ taught it, but out of the accretions that have gathered round it, or the manipulations of it by dogmatic and ecclesiastical hands? May not the failure to arrive at unity among Christians be the fault, not of Christianity or Christians, but of theologians, and dogmatists, and sacramentarians?

Or may not these differences spring, not so much from actual divergence of view, as from the disproportion in which the several parts of the truth are held in the mind? Undue weight may be placed on some doctrine, or rite, or practice, whilst too little attention is given to others; and would not many differences disappear if Christians took more pains to attend to the proportion of the truth?

Were we, for example, to realize more clearly than we have yet done the relation which the ethical element bears to the governmental and the dogmatic, to the ritual and the ecclesiastical contents of the Christian Religion, would there not before long be a greater consensus of opinion among Christians? Most of the disputes that have arisen within the Church, and created strife and division and bitterness, have had their origin in the undue emphasis that has been laid on what might be called the minor dogmatics of

Christianity. Had its ethics received their proper place, whilst there would still have been argument and differences of opinion, there would have been no break in the spiritual unity.

When, therefore, certain dogmas, or even small punctilios of ecclesiastical procedure begin to bulk large in the Christian consciousness, and to arouse among believers a contentious spirit which threatens to blight the fruit of the spirit—love, joy, peace, we should calmly face the question as to their place in the Christianity of Christ. Do they occupy the commanding position in the New Testament which we are inclined to give them? It has been declared by those who look on Christianity from the outside that it has little to do with ethics. "Morality was never the special objective of Christianity"; "the true end of Christianity was not morality in this world, but salvation in the next."[1] A certain colour has been imparted to statements like these by popular presentations of the gospel which would lead you to understand that 'other-worldness' is of its essence, and 'this-worldness' a thing to be lightly esteemed. But the question is not as to representations, either popular or theological, of the gist of Christ's teaching; it is as to that teaching itself, so far

[1] *Service of Man*, pp. 172, 273.

as we can catch its main tendencies from the lips and life of the Master. And our contention is, that the Christianity of Christ deals more with ethics than with dogma, more with the conduct of men, here and now, than with their condition in the world to come. With Jesus and His apostles conduct is even more than three-fourths of life. Were this fact universally acknowledged, would not thousands of disputants over Christianity be lifted above whole regions of fruitless controversy?

Further, would not Christians get rid of many things which now tend to keep them separate if they were mutually to agree to submit to some ultimate standard of authority? There have been four such standards in use in Christendom—the Church, the Scriptures, the Reason, the Christ. In one or other of these have all who call themselves Christians vested the final appeal in questions of faith and practice. But the difficulty in the employment of such tests is to leave out the disturbing presence of what scientists call the personal equation. Something of our own will often, despite our best intentions and most earnest efforts, creep in to mar our vision, and to create dissension and strife.

Is it the Church that is spoken of as the infallible authority? then the question arises,

Which Church? Whose Church? Why should it be your church, one set of Christians asks of another, any more than mine? There are so many different views as to what constitutes the true Church. The Church, for example, to take an extreme case, which regards herself as infallible, is looked upon by another section of Christendom as not only fallible but corrupt; and who is to decide between them?

Or is it the Scriptures that are regarded as the final authority? It is soon discovered that there are different ways of reading the Scriptures. With some there is no sense of perspective, each part being equally authoritative, even the sayings and doings of Jesus receiving no pre-eminence. Others speak of the progressive character of revelation, and read its several parts in the light of this principle. There are distinctions drawn, too, between the essential and the non-essential, between the transitory and the abiding. In this and other ways the Scriptures cease to be the ultimate authority, which now runs the imminent risk of being invested in the subjective caprice of the individual interpreter.

Or do men fall back on reason and say, Here we reach the final criterion of truth in religion? Again we are forced to ask, Whose reason? Is any one foolhardy enough to claim to have full possession of the universal and infallible Reason?

In a well-known book on the *History of Doctrines*, the writer, in speaking of a certain sect, says: "They, (the S.'s) reject all that is not in accordance with reason," and then the author adds in parenthesis, "that is, the reason of the S.'s." And when it is said, as it was the other day at a public conference of a body of Christians, that "the absolute authority of Jesus is shivered," and that "we must turn to that authority which is lodged in the individual consciousness," the reply is at once suggested: This consciousness can be no more than 'individual,' or else, instead of giving different replies to religious questions, it would return in all cases the same answer to each. But your individual consciousness and mine may differ on such matters, for example, as the Incarnation, Miracles, the Resurrection; and when they do, when your reason rejects them (sometimes perhaps with a trifle too lofty a scorn), and mine accepts them, who is to be the judge between us? Instead of getting on to a common meeting place above all strife, are we not down in the valley of conflict again, and engaged in that most profitless of all fights, the battle of the Reasons?

Or, once more, is it Christ that is chosen as the ultimate authority in religion? Even then we must not be too sure that we have got rid of that subjec-

tive element which mars all unbiased investigation, and prevents all real union. There was a party in the Church at Corinth which said, "We are of Christ." Probably it was the narrowest and bitterest of the four factions which threatened to rend that unhappy Christian community asunder. If you wish at the present hour to find the individuals who have the most contracted view of our great religion, the most conceited notions of themselves, and the most uncharitable opinions concerning their fellow-believers, you will be most likely to find them in some small sect or party, the members of which claim to call no man Master but Christ.

Yet if we are to take our Lord's own guidance in this matter, it is to Him, finally, that we must come as our ultimate authority. He is very emphatic in claiming sole jurisdiction over His disciples. He is the Head of the Church; the "Lord and Imperator of the Scriptures," as Luther has called Him; the Light of the Reason. "Hear the Church, hear the Scriptures, hear the Reason," such are the cries which resound around us. And from the opening heavens there comes the still small voice, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him." He is the only possible common ultimate authority in the Christian Religion. But the difficulty is, to hear Him ourselves, at first hand, and afterwards

to convince others that what we have heard is His own clear authentic pronouncement.

There is one way of getting nearer this goal, if not of actually attaining to it. If, instead of each individual Christian attempting to interpret Him from his own limited standpoint, we would allow Jesus to interpret Himself! If we could get His own answers to the questions which arise in connection with His religion; if, instead of attempting to place the emphasis ourselves, we could ascertain the exact weight He gave to certain truths and usages; if we could stand with unprejudiced minds, and hearts, and wills in His presence; if we were to number ourselves among the 'babes' of whom He speaks, not eager, as the 'wise and prudent' are, to hear their own voices, but anxious to hear His, the hidden principle for which we are searching, the 'secret of Jesus,' might be discovered by us.

There are still other ways of getting above the differences which divide Christians, and tend to make religion at times a by-word amongst men. One may fix his eye, for example, on the chief end of Christianity, and see how eagerly it is sought after by men of widely different views. There is a fine chapter in Mozley's book, *Ruling Ideas in Early Ages*, headed, "The End the Test of a Progressive Religion." This test has not been used as much

as its value demands, in judging of the varying forms that Christianity takes. The test has often been one or other of what are called the means of grace. Were we dwelling more on the end we might sooner discover that feature of catholicity which every believing heart yearns to see in more active operation among Christians. There can be no doubt as to what that end is. All who name the name of Christ are agreed on it. It is Christlikeness. All things in connection with what is called the 'Christian Religion' are meant to lead on to this great issue.

Or we might consider the significance of such Christlike lives themselves. It will, as a matter of fact, be found to be impossible to answer the question,—Where will you discover the finest product of Christianity, the most Christ-like disposition and life? in what particular community or sect? No one of the numerous divisions into which Christendom is split up can boast a monopoly here. You may find this rare specimen of the Christian amongst a class of believers who stand out most stoutly for the necessity of a particular form of Church government, and a special creed, and a careful observance of rites and ceremonies; but you may also find another, equally redolent of the savour of Christ, who regards most of these things as

of quite secondary importance, and who, indeed, classifies some of them as amongst "the weak and beggarly elements" which the spiritual man should long ere this have left behind. "There is no salvation outside of the visible Church," men cry, that is, the Church which they see with their eyes. And lo! some other Church which has been quite invisible to this one, gives the arrogant statement the lie, by showing a man not only saved but sanctified, a sacrifice "ready to be offered" unto the Lord.

History, moreover, records facts such as these: that the best men in certain periods of the Church's history have often remained outside the Church in order to save their Christianity; that the best Christians have frequently been put out of the Church; that much of the salt which has preserved the world from corruption has been found amongst so-called 'heretics,' the greatest of all such in the religious world being Jesus Christ Himself; that to-day, as in the time when the phrase was first coined, "there are many sheep without the fold, and many goats within it." Who can deny that there are Christians outside all ecclesiastical organizations who put to shame many who are within? They are men, as a rule, who have been unfortunate in becoming associated with the formalism and narrowness of sectarian

Christianity, and who, growing weary of empty forms or unseemly bickerings, have sought and found their Christ without the Church's pale.

Now, it is in what constitutes the elements of this Christlike life, and not in any dogmatic or ecclesiastical standing, that the root of the matter is to be discovered. And, with our attention fixed on that, all those who rejoice to acknowledge Christ as supreme may yet hope to rise above the minor differences which at present divide them.

By a careful consideration of these points, and by following in the path to which they lead, we begin to perceive that the thing we are in search of—the unifying principle of Christ's kingdom—if it is to be discovered at all, must lie within certain limits. It must consist of an element, or of elements, which are common to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, to all who make Him Sovereign of their lives, and are seeking to be made comformable to His image.

The age in which we live presents features which make one more than ordinarily hopeful of reaching this common Christian meeting-ground. Among these I would name the historical spirit which seeks to reproduce the past with scrupulous fidelity and strictest accuracy; the inductive method which, already applied to all the other sciences, is

now aiming at bringing theology under its sway; the acknowledgment of the progressive character of Revelation, and the consequent placing of the New Testament in the position of affording the highest disclosure of the mind and will of God; the rise of ethical and humanitarian views and sentiments; that steady spread of altruism which has been such a marked feature of the sixty years' reign of our Queen; the fact that men are being brought closer to one another in a thousand ways, by travelling facilities, by the development of education, by the breaking down of not a few middle walls of partition between class and class. There is also the cry, "Back to Christ," the growing determination amongst the ripest theological students, as well as amongst the rank and file of Christians, to accord to Jesus of Nazareth the highest authority in the regulation of practical Christian life, as well as in the establishment of Christian doctrine; the determination to get at His exact words, to get Him to state His own impression of what constitutes the Christian life. It is the voice of the age in both teacher and pupil which finds utterance in the words: "I am firmly persuaded that a resolute return to the teaching of Jesus Himself will be the most powerful means of promoting and strengthening the Christian religion in our time, and

making it clear and intelligible."[1] And, we might add, of reaching the fundamental principle of this religion, if any such there be.

The present treatise will be an attempt to lead in the latter direction. We shall seek to exhibit Christ Himself enunciating the central thesis of His religion. We shall try to get His own view of the matter; to show that it was not a new idea, but one that had been from the beginning; to prove that it is one of those deep foundation truths which meets with the instinctive response of man's whole nature.

We shall keep before us, for the most part, this single cluster of Christian principles, and endeavour to apply it to different departments of Christian thought and action. Such a course will confine us within certain clearly marked limits. And it may well be that we shall be charged with making a number of serious omissions in a book that professes to deal with the Christian religion. But we have thought it best to keep on this somewhat limited path. The matters which are passed over have been exhaustively treated in numberless theological works. We shall presuppose much that has been accomplished here. What we wish to do is to bring one series of truths into proper focus,

[1] *The Teaching of Jesus* (Wendt), Preface, p. 2. (Clark's trans.)

or, to vary the metaphor, to get our foot down on some piece of solid ground, which shall be acknowledged to be common to all Christians. And if certain things are missed which the reader expects to find, we can only beg him to remember our limits, and not to think it strange if material should be omitted which does not come within our scope.

One more preliminary remark falls to be made. Dealing as we do throughout this book with the plain trend of Christ's teaching, especially in one direction, in the apostolic age, and not with minor details, we do not regard it as necessary to enter into critical questions regarding the authenticity, date, authorship, etc., of the books of the New Testament. It is granted that the general current of thought in the New Testament represents correctly the mind of Christ, whatever may be said of lesser questions. We shall therefore adopt the popular designations of the New Testament books, without deeming it to be necessary to express any opinion on their origin.

CHAPTER II

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

We shall be called upon to refer frequently to 'The Christian Religion.' We have already seen how the phrase may be misunderstood. It will be well, therefore, to begin with an examination and definition of the expression, that we may arrive at once at a clear understanding as to what it is to signify, at least for us in these pages.

There are two questions to be answered: (1) What is the significance of the word 'religion'? (2) What do we mean by the term 'Christian'?

First, then, What are we to understand by the term, 'religion'?

The word is in such frequent use, and is looked upon as so universally and clearly comprehended, that it may well appear to be a work of supererogation, and even to savour of pedantry, to ask the reader to look at it afresh. But there are one or

two points in connection with its derivation and employment which call for some attention.

It is a notable fact, for example, that though the term is so common among Christians, and is supposed to express adequately and clearly the attitude of the soul towards divine realities, it is not to be found in the Bible. It is not employed by patriarch, or psalmist, or prophet; or by Jesus, or any of His disciples. And what is more, there is no term that may be regarded as closely akin to it to be discovered in Holy Writ. Readers of the Authorized Version of the Old Testament will note that it does not occur there. It appears two or three times in the New Testament; but the original word of which it professes to be a translation can, in no single case, be regarded as bearing the signification which is attached to the term 'religion' to-day.

We have an instance of its use in the twenty-sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The Apostle Paul is speaking in his defence before Agrippa. In the course of his opening remarks he says, "My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the straitest sect of my religion,[1] I lived a Pharisee." The word rendered

[1] Κατὰ τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην αἵρεσιν τῆς ἡμετέρας θρησκείας.—Acts xxvi. 4, 5.

'religion' means ritual, the outward rites and ceremonies of Judaism, its sacrifices and feasts, its fastings and washings, all of which have little to do with what we should understand by 'religion.'

The same Greek term appears again in the Epistle of James in a passage which has been, in its English dress, a fruitful source of misunderstanding and perplexity, and which has indeed been one of the chief feeders of a very misleading doctrine. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."[1] As Coleridge pointed out, the apostle did not mean to speak here of what is now generally understood by 'religion,' but rather to contrast the external garb of the old dispensation with that of the new.[2] What a superiority the new has over the old, in that it has "light for its garment, its very robe is righteousness."

True Christian ritual, James means to say, is to manifest itself not any longer in elaborate forms

[1] James i. 27.

[2] "The outward service (θρησκεία) of ancient religion, the rites, ceremonies, and ceremonial vestments of the old law, had morality for their substance. They were the *letter* of which morality was the *spirit*; the enigma of which morality was the *meaning*. But morality itself is the service and ceremonial (*cultus exterior* θρησκεία) of the Christian religion."—*Aids to Reflection*, p. 14.

and ceremonies, but in charity and a blameless life. Our translators either misunderstood the original, or else, as is more likely, they used the word 'religion' in a sense that is now obsolete. We have this old signification in Milton. Certain heathen idolatries are characterized in *Paradise Lost* as

> " . . . . . adorned
> With gay religions, full of pomp and gold."

The same word occurs in the second chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, where it is rendered "worshipping." "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping[1] of angels." "The word," says Lightfoot, "refers properly to the external rites of religion, and so gets to signify an over-scrupulous devotion to outward forms."

There remains one more instance of the use of the word 'religion' in the Authorized Version of the New Testament. "Ye have heard," Paul writes to the Galatians, "of my conversation in times past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church and wasted it; and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."[2] The word here rendered

[1] *θρησκεία*, Colossians ii. 18. [2] Galatians i. 13, 14.

'religion' is Judaism,[1] a term like the one already referred to, signifying the outward rites and ceremonies of a service that has long since passed away, and not what we mean when we speak of a man's 'religion.'

Now, the fact that the word 'religion' is not to be found in the Bible, and, above all, that it is not used by our Lord or His apostles, should occasion thought. We would naturally expect it to be there. Almost all the other words used by Christians which refer to supersensible realities and experiences are drawn from a Scriptural source. This, however, might not have been regarded as serious, if the term always bore a definite and unambiguous signification. But no one will venture to affirm that this is the case. It is involved in ambiguity from beginning to end.

The word itself (*religio*) is of doubtful derivation. Ancient authors are not agreed upon its origin. Cicero derives it from *relegere*, to gather up again, to take up, consider, ponder; Augustine says that it comes from *reëligere* to choose again, to seek once more a God who has been neglected. Lactantius derives it from *religare*, to fasten, to hold back, to moor.[2]

And not only is there this obscurity hanging

[1] Ιουδαϊσμος.

[2] *Vinculo pietatis obstricti deo religati sumus.*

about the etymology of the term, there are still differences of view as to its meaning. Almost every great writer has grappled with it, crying, like Jacob, "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name," and each has a different definition of it, a different idea of its seat and function. Religion is feeling, the feeling of absolute dependence on God (Schleiermacher). It is knowledge, absolute knowledge, the knowledge acquired by the finite spirit of its essence as absolute spirit (Hegel). It is willing; it consists in our recognizing all our duties as divine commands (Kant). It is the worship of God (the general view). It is the worship of humanity (Comte). It is morality touched by emotion (Mw. Arnold). It is a mental faculty, that faculty which, independent of, nay, in spite of sense and reason, enables man to apprehend the Infinite under different names and under varying disguises (Max Müller). Religion is the thing a man does practically believe; the thing a man does practically lay to heart and know for certain concerning his vital relations to this mysterious universe, and his duty and destiny there (Carlyle).[1]

Now, every such definition shows some point

[1] Cf. *Social Evolution* (Kidd), where other definitions may be found, p. 90.

of variance with its neighbour. At one time it is the objective side that is touched on, at another the subjective; now it is one faculty, anon another, that is its seat. Each of these definitions, we feel, is defective. None of them can in itself be regarded as descriptive of that attitude of the whole man which one would like to see indicated by the term 'religion.'

Whilst there is this conflict of opinion among what may be called experts, it is no wonder if there should be some haziness in connection with the ordinary use of the word. It never has had a fixed and universally recognized meaning. Take two instances to show how imperfectly it fulfils the function of presenting a single definite idea or set of ideas to the mind. During all the ages of Papal dominion in Europe "a 'religious' person did not mean any one who felt and allowed the bonds that bound him to God and to his fellowmen, but one who had taken peculiar vows upon him, a member of one of the monkish orders; a 'religious' house did not mean, nor does it now mean in the Church of Rome, a Christian household ordered in the fear of God, but a house in which these persons were gathered together according to the rule of some man. A 'religion' meant not a service of

God, but a monastic order; and taking the monastic vows was termed going into a 'religion.'"[1]

But we do not need to go back to the Middle Ages to show how difficult it is to arrive at a common understanding as to the signification of the word. In one of our latest novels we read, "He (Sandy Grieve) had suffered so much through religion during the last few months, that in the final moment of humanity the soul had taken refuge in numbness—apathy."[2] "Suffered so much through religion!" Why, here is a word which to one man points to a source from which he receives the surest relief and the most lasting joy; but which to another is associated with the deepest gloom and the acutest mental suffering!

And even where the term bears a generally accepted meaning, there are errors of an intellectual and moral kind involved in its use, which are productive of serious harm. Thoughtful men are getting to realize more and more that it is our personality and life, as an undivided whole, that God desires to see lifted up, here and now, to a higher plane; but the word 'religion,' as commonly employed, tends to perpetuate the idea, that what meets with the favour of God is

[1] *Study of Words* (Trench), p. 9.
[2] *David Grieve* (Mrs. H. Ward), p. 33.

something by itself, a duty, or a set of duties, demanding the exercise of a special faculty. Or it seems to lead its votaries to believe that the chief thing to do in this world is to look forward to the next, and prepare for it. There has seldom been as great a wealth of meaning put into the term as is conveyed in the definition, "A man's religion is the expression of his ultimate attitude to the Universe, the summed-up meaning and purpose of his whole consciousness of things" (Ed. Caird).

But the most serious trouble that has been caused by the word is the distinction which it has been the means of emphasizing between our duties to God, and our duties to our fellowmen. 'Religion' is commonly looked upon as the service of God, 'morality' as the service of man. But if we grasp the Scripture idea of the relation of the human spirit to its manifold duties we shall see, that there is no such distinction recognized in the Word of God. The Bible presents to man all his duties under a single principle, and this unity must be maintained. It is impossible, in the light of revelation, to speak of fulfilling any duty whatever, apart from a reference to that God to whom all life is related. There can be no

doubt that the word 'religion' has tended to hinder men from rising to the height indicated in the words, "*Whatsoever* ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."[1]

Other words which are regarded as synonymous with 'religion' labour under similar defects. More particularly, they fail to cover the whole of our relationships Godward and manward. If, for example, instead of speaking of a man's 'religion,' I refer to his 'piety,' there is an inadequate impression produced on the mind by the new term. Originally it had other connotations than it has now. The hero of Virgil's great epic is spoken of as *pius Æneas*. He obtained this name, not because he was a faithful worshipper of the gods, but because he honoured and aided his parents. This earthward look of the word is discoverable in our own literature, as where Milton speaks of "the piety which he showed to his country." It is also found in the New Testament: "But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety[2] at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God."[3] Such a meaning is

[1] Colossians iii. 17.
[2] εὐσεβεῖν.
[3] 1 Timothy v. 4.

still concealed in the word itself, the terms 'pity' and 'piety' having a common root. The term 'piety' has now, however, so entirely lost its manward reference that the modern Pharisee, equally with his ancient prototype, believes that he can regard himself as pious, though all family and social duties and responsibilities have been neglected, or even rudely violated.

Take another word which does service in this region—'devoutness.'[1] This term signified originally caution and carefulness in regard to human things. But it has long since ceased to look to man, and has come to mean exclusively the attitude which the soul assumes towards the divine.

You find a reversal of the process in other words. The divine is lost sight of, and the human only remains. This is the case with the term 'culture.' The word *cultus*, from which it is derived, was used among ancient writers to express the reverence and worship due to the gods.[2] This meaning lingers on in the word 'cult' (French, *culte*), which is still employed to designate a form of divine worship. But the word 'culture' itself has so completely lost its upward glance, that many of its foremost apostles are declaring that its highest form can only be reached when we have

[1] *Εὐλαβεία.* Cicero employs it in this sense.

dispensed entirely with the aid of heavenly powers, which powers, indeed, they declare, exist only in the imagination of the superstitious.

From all this it will be seen that it is difficult to find a term to define accurately what may be looked upon as man's highest duty and most solemn responsibility. None of the words in use bears the same sense to all. Each of them fails to embrace the full contents of the idea that is meant to be conveyed.

There is one quarter, however, to which we have not yet turned. We have not examined the Bible itself. Let us now see if there is any light and leading here.

The word 'religion,' in its ordinary acceptation, does not, as we have seen, occur in the Scriptures. But there are certain terms, 'thrown out' in the direction in which it points.

Three such terms may be named. They help to furnish an answer to the question, What is the final product of the spirit of man under God? It is a good thing to start from a position like this. To have an idea, from the beginning, of the goal of the human consciousness; to hold before our eyes the best that our nature can produce, will give us a clue to the understanding of the whole matter which will be of great value.

The terms we refer to are 'Righteousness,' 'Fruit,' and what may be called 'New Manhood.'

1. *Righteousness.*[1]—This is one of the great pivot-words of the Bible. Around it the whole of the Scriptures turns. It is one of the characteristic words of the Old Testament saints. Abraham, Moses, Job, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and all the prophets used it. It is also a great New Testament word, being frequently employed by Jesus and the apostles. One cannot help feeling, indeed, as he reads, that it takes the place, in many instances, which the term 'religion' has come to occupy in our ordinary speech.

Righteousness is the sum total of all that God requires of man, of all that He commands, and of all that He appoints. It signifies the establishment of right disposition and conduct in all the relationships of life. It is a social as well as an individualistic quality. It gathers up into itself both what we call 'religion' and what we call 'morality.' "As applied to men, 'righteousness' specially denotes a disposition for action which takes the will of God as its supreme norm. Righteousness in this sense is the most general designation for the pious God-pleasing disposition or conduct of men which is opposed to sin. The term then

[1] δικαιοσύνη.

also comprises in its meaning that pious disposition which has God as its direct object, as well as the moral disposition which, according to God's command, is to be shown to other men."[1]

Like all great conceptions, this idea of righteousness has run through several stages, evolving and developing towards its ideal. It is dependent for its quality largely on the standard which is set before it. Paul speaks of two kinds of righteousness, the righteousness which is of the law, and the righteousness which is by the faith of Christ: the righteousness whose measure and rule are to be found in an external legal authority and standard, and the righteousness whose rule is inward and spiritual. At another time the distinction is between one's own righteousness and the righteousness of God.[2] It is the latter form that is inculcated in the New Testament; the "disposition for action" which looks to heaven for guidance and help; which is incarnated in the perfect nature of Christ, and which is regulated and inspired by the law of the Spirit of life within the heart, and kept alive and active by living trust in God. It is truth in the inward parts, according to Him who is our righteousness.

[1] *The Teaching of Jesus* (Wendt), Vol. I., p. 257. (Clark's trans.)
[2] Romans x. 3.

Now, while there may be abuses connected with the employment of this word, as in the case of the term 'religion,' it possesses advantages which the latter cannot boast. It is a scriptural term. It has also a well-understood signification. If it were put for a time in the place of the word 'religion' it might excite thought and inquiry. If in our consideration of different Faiths, for example, we were speaking of their 'righteousness' instead of their 'religion,' there would be something more definite before our minds, and also a better means of comparison.

The same effect would be produced in the sphere of the individual life. When we refer to a man's 'religion' we may be thinking of the particular ecclesiastical community to which he has attached himself; or the outward observances he attends to; or the creed he professes; or the sentiment of reverence or aspiration which he breathes. We are never sure what is meant. There is a danger also in employing the term 'religion,' lest we should fix on some non-essential feature in a man's faith or practice, and regard that as indicating his spiritual state. But when we speak of a man's hunger and thirst after the righteousness of God; or when we speak of this righteousness in thought and life as being the

prize of the Christian's calling, we know exactly where we are.

Righteousness, then, not religion, is the goal that is set before us in the Bible. When, in the gray morning of history, Abraham believed in the Lord, "He counted it to him for righteousness."[1] And all through the Old Testament ages this great word runs like a golden thread, until we come to Him who called upon us to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."[2] And after He departed from the world His followers took up the strain. "The kingdom of God," Paul says to the Romans, "is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."[3] James speaks of it as the harvest which heavenly wisdom produces. "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."[4] Peter describes the great purpose of Christ's sacrifice in the words—"That we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness."[5] John declares that "every one that doeth righteousness is born of God."[6] Timothy is exhorted "to flee these things; and to follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."[7] Christ is spoken of as "the

[1] Genesis xv. 6.
[2] Matthew vi. 33.
[3] Romans xiv. 17.
[4] James iii. 18.
[5] 1 Peter ii. 24.
[6] 1 John ii. 29.
[7] 1 Timothy vi. 11.

end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."[1] "A sceptre of righteousness," says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, working out an Old Testament Messianic vein, "is the sceptre of Thy kingdom."[2]

It is righteousness that is placed before us everywhere in sacred writ. And it is righteous men that are wanted everywhere in the world; righteous men in public life and in private life; righteous statesmen and righteous husbandmen; righteous merchants and righteous mechanics; students who will study righteousness, and practise what they study; men and women who, in all their various spheres of labour, in the senate, at the bar, in the pulpit, in the workshop, in the factory, in the warehouse, in the social circle, in the home, will make righteousness the groundwork and superstructure of their lives. We are to "go about to establish the righteousness of God"—that is the vocation wherewith, as His children, we are called.

2. *Fruit.*[3]—The second term, 'Fruit,' is also one which takes the place in the Scriptures that the word 'religion' occupies in our ordinary speech. Where we would say, "He is a religious man," the Bible says, "He bears fruit unto holiness." This word, like 'righteousness,' occurs so frequently

[1] Romans x. 4. [2] Hebrews i. 8. [3] Καρπὸς.

in the pages of the Bible that there is no need to spend time in emphasizing its importance. It represents one of the outstanding indications of the true attitude of our nature towards higher things, and the effect that these produce in life and conduct. The good man is like "a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season."[1] "Israel is a vineyard in a very fruitful hill," from which it was expected that rich full clusters of good grapes would be gathered, but which disappointed its owner by bringing forth wild grapes.[2] Many other instances of the use of this image might be gathered from the Old Testament. It also occurs with great frequency in the New. John the Baptist urges the Pharisees and Sadducees who come to his baptism to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Jesus is the vine, believers are the branches. All His efforts are directed towards making the branches fruitful. He purges them that they may bring forth more fruit. God is glorified by their bearing much fruit. Judgment comes because there is no fruit borne. Christians are to be known by their fruits. The honest heart is good soil "which also beareth fruit, some an hundredfold, some

[1] Psalm i. 3 (cf. Psalm xcii. 12, Jeremiah xvii. 8, etc.).
[2] Isaiah v.

sixty, some thirty." The apostles labour that they may have some fruit amongst their hearers. Chastening "yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby": and so in many other passages.

What is meant by 'fruit' is clearly indicated in such verses as the following: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (self-control), against such there is no law."[1] "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth."[2] It is temper, disposition, principle, character, conduct, life.

Here, again, we have a word that conveys a plain and invariable meaning, and one that should help to dispel certain delusions which are apt to prevail where such an indefinite term as 'religion' is used. Thus men have brought themselves to believe that they can put 'religion' off or on when they please, that they can lay it aside with their Sunday clothes, and resume it again when the day appointed for its exercise comes round. But there is in the term 'fruit' the idea of necessary continuity. It is impossible for a fruit tree to put off and on its fruit as it chooses. The word points also to the active co-operation

[1] Galatians v. 22, 23. [2] Ephesians v. 9.

of the whole nature. The entire being of the plant conspires towards the production of its fruit. And religion is not a thing of times and seasons; nor is it a pursuit to be engaged in by some of our faculties and powers only. It is the organic outcome of the entire man.

We occasionally find these two words, 'righteousness' and 'fruit,' in the same passage. Thus Paul in one of his prayers beseeches God that his readers may "be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God."[1] Again, he writes to the Corinthians, "Now, he that ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food and multiply your seed sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness"[2] (cf. the passage from Ephesians just quoted).

3. *New-Manhood.*[3]—There is a third phrase found in the New Testament, and more especially in the epistles of Paul, which demands attention. The apostle is constantly holding before his readers as an object worthy of all desire and struggle, what may be termed New-Manhood. He exhorts the individual "to put on the new man,[4] which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," "which is

[1] Philippians i. 11.
[2] 2 Corinthians ix. 10.
[3] ὁ καινὸς ἀνθρῶπος.
[4] τὸν καινὸν ἀνθρῶπον.

renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him."[1] He shows also that the gifts and graces which have been bestowed on the Church have as their end the development of a manhood which has Christ as its model and inspiration. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man,[2] unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."[3]

In the sphere of grace, as in that of nature, the end of all effort is the bringing to perfection of the object on which care and skill are being expended. And the chief end of religion is to bring human nature to its prime; to help us to realize that life of full fruition which haunts us all. Its cry is, Be perfect! Be fulfilled! Come up, O man, to your very best, physically, intellectually, morally, spiritually!

In these three words then—Righteousness, Fruit, New-Manhood—we have conveyed to us the scriptural contents of what we call 'religion.' Take them together, and there is ample material for the formation of an adequate conception of the word. They speak to us not of theological abstractions, but of the evolution of the highest type of human nature, under the quickening and ripening influence of the

[1] Ephesians iv. 8, 24; Colossians iii. 10.
[2] εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον. [3] Ephesians iv. 13.

Spirit of God. They tell us that 'religion' is more than outward forms and ceremonies; that its great aim is to stimulate growth in the likeness of the Son of Man.

Let us consider now the second term which has to be defined, *viz.* 'Christian.' What are we to understand by the 'Christian' religion? This word labours under the same disadvantages as attend the term 'religion.' It is not, that is, a scriptural term, and it does not bear an unequivocal meaning. It was not coined, nor was it used, by Jesus or any of His disciples; nor was it employed by any of his followers till after the apostolic age. Where it is used in the New Testament it is either by a pagan, as a term of contempt, or by an apostle, as the designation of believers which carried with it the idea of contumely and abuse.

It is found in three places only in the New Testament. It appears for the first time in the eleventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and the twenty-sixth verse, where we read, "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." Antioch, we know, was famous in the ancient world for its skill in coining nicknames. And there can be little doubt that this name was, in the first instance, fastened on the members of the despised community of believers in some sally of pagan wit.

It occurs again in the response which Agrippa made to Paul at the close of the apostle's defence. "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."[1] "Ah! by a very little argument, in a short space of time, by a trifling effort, you think to make me,—King Agrippa,—a member of the contemptible sect that has been dubbed 'Christian'!"

In the third instance, and the only one in which the term is used by an apostle, *viz.* in Peter's first Epistle, where the believer is spoken of as suffering "as a Christian,"[2] the sacred writer is evidently thinking of the scoffing use of the term by heathen persecutors.

The followers of Jesus preferred to call themselves by such names as brethren, disciples, believers, saints, elect, faithful, those "of the way." They did not speak of their fellow-Christians, but of their fellow-citizens, fellow-heirs, fellow-helpers, fellow-labourers, fellow-servants. Or, if any reference was made to Christ in connection with their name, such a man as the Apostle Paul loved to speak of himself directly as "the slave of Jesus Christ."

Now, as in the case of the term 'religion,' it may

[1] ἐν ὀλίγῳ μὲ πείθεις Χριστιανὸν γενέσθαι.—Acts xxvi. 28.
[2] 1 Peter iv. 17.

seem pedantic to disturb a word which has been in universal use for so long a time. But no one can read history without being struck with the manner in which the word has been misused. Many things have been called 'Christian' which have been utterly alien to the spirit of Jesus, and which He would be the first to repudiate. Bundles of repulsive doctrines, deeds as carnal, and vile, and cruel, as have ever disgraced human nature, have been labelled with this name.

To take one out of innumerable instances. Philip II. of Spain in congratulating the ambassador of the French king on the success which had followed the plot to murder the Protestants of Paris on St. Bartholomew's day, declared that 'no one else deserved the title of most Christian.' The event was hailed at Rome, the accredited seat of Christianity, with a joy beyond description. "The Pope, accompanied by his cardinals, went solemnly to the church of St. Mark to render thanks to God for the grace thus singularly vouchsafed to the Holy See, and to all Christendom." Charles himself afterwards, in instigating Mondoucet to get the poor French prisoners and every man in Mons cut to pieces, says that "He will be guilty of a great wrong to Christianity if he does otherwise." [1]

[1] *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* (Motley), pp. 483, 486.

And even where there has been no such gross misapplication of the term, things that belong to the non-essentials of Christianity, and not to its essence, have often received undue prominence, whilst the main end that the religion of Jesus Christ has in view has been concealed.

Put a volume containing what professes to be the history of the 'Christian religion' into the hands of a man who is approaching the subject for the first time. What perplexities it would involve him in! He sees Christians engaged in the definition of doctrinal terms, or the elaboration of credal forms, and in persecuting those who differ from them; and he comes to the conclusion that Christianity is a scheme of metaphysics. Or he sees that for hundreds of years there was a constant series of fierce disputes among the leaders of the Church, for ecclesiastical power and preferment; and he concludes that the main thing about Christianity is its system of government, and the high positions it has to offer to men. Or he meets a class of Christians who are always speaking about the sacraments, and the necessity of attending carefully to the ritual of the Church; and he draws the inference that Christianity is an elaborate system of ceremonial observances. Or, once more, he comes across a heated period of Church history, when some special doctrine obtained abnor-

mal prominence, and he is forced to the conclusion that the main feature of Christianity is a mysterious and elaborate plan whereby a certain number of individuals are selected out of the mass of humanity, and given the inestimable privilege of entering heaven, whilst arrangements are made for consigning all others to everlasting torments.

In each of these cases the term 'Christian' has been used. The name has been claimed by those who held certain views or practised certain rites, and denied to those who did not agree with them.

Now, we must arrive at some definite understanding as to what the term Christian is to signify for us. There is one place only where a common agreement can be come to, and that is in the pages of the New Testament. We find there, that to be a Christian is to obey the direct commands of Christ, to breathe His spirit, to live His life. It is to think, to love, to live, and to work "according to Christ Jesus."[1] Christianity is Christ. He is its one foundation and chief corner-stone. All other masters can be separated from the schools they have formed, or the systems of truth they have built up; but Christianity cannot even be imagined without Christ. "In Him Christianity has its source, and that so

[1] Romans xv. 5.

absolutely, that without Him Christianity would be unthinkable."[1]

This view is being constantly presented to us in the New Testament. Thus, where we would use the term religious or Christian, some phrase is employed in which the name of Christ appears. The Apostle does not say, I am living a religious life, or I am living a Christian life, but, To me to live is Christ. If any man be (not a Christian, but) in Christ, he is a new creature. He lays everything aside, he counts all things but loss, he forgets the things that are behind, and reaches forth to those that are before, that he may win Christ, and be found in Him. He is the slave of Jesus Christ. He bears in his body the marks (the stigmata, the slave-brands) of the Lord Jesus Christ. He seeks in all his public labours to make Christ more and more a living reality to the soul. He agonizes to get reproduced in the minds and hearts of his hearers the very personality of Christ, in its several stages, from birth to maturity.

Now he thinks of them as Bethlehem, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."[2] Then he prays that their

[1] *System of Christian Doctrine* (Dorner), Vol. 1., p. 49. (Clark.)
[2] Galatians iv. 19.

hearts may become like Nazareth, His home, or Capernaum, His own city, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."[1] Again, we are led to Calvary, as he cries, "I am crucified with Christ."[2] Or we see him longing to "know the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."[3] Anon, the believer is reminded of how he has gone down with Christ into the tomb, being "buried with Him by baptism into death," being "planted together in the likeness of His death";[4] or, finally, he is reminded of his communion with Jesus in His resurrection and ascension, "And hath raised us up together and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."[5] Christ's position in the Christian system is like that of the sun in the heavens, or like that of the heart in the body, and He should be recognized at all times as the living central force from which all spiritual light and heat and energy come.

But this has not always been the place assigned to Him in past ages. It has been hard throughout the centuries to maintain Christ in the Church as supreme Arbiter and Lord. For more than a thousand years He was overshadowed by the

[1] Ephesians iii. 17. [2] Galatians ii. 19. [3] Philippians iii. 10.
[4] Romans vi. 3, 5. [5] Ephesians ii. 6.

luxuriant undergrowth of theological dogmas, or spiritual despotisms. The believer has had put between him and his Lord,—Virgin Marys, saints, crucifixes, relics, masses, incense, penances, popes, priests, and what not; or in other sections of the Church,—theologies, ecclesiastical councils and decrees, creeds, confessions, forms of Church polity and government, and even the Bible itself, till the form of the Master has been almost lost sight of. It is the Church; it is the priesthood; it is the ordinance: it is orthodoxy; it is Bibliolatry, and not the personal Christ. And even where He seems to hold sway it is not always the Christ who lived, and suffered, and bled, eighteen centuries ago in Palestine, but some imperfect representation of Him constructed out of narrow views of His person and work.[1] It is only in the apostolic age of the Church that Christianity shows itself, as a whole, to be Christo-centric.

There is consequently ample justification for the use of such expressions as the following: "Our duty is to set aside the so-called 'Christian religion' and to replace in its stead the Lord Jesus Christ."[2]

[1] "The ecclesiastical Christ is to a large extent not the Christ of the Gospels, but a creation of scholastic theology. Notwithstanding all our preaching, Christ is not well known." —*The Kingdom of God* (A. B. Bruce), p. 348.

[2] *Still Hours* (Rothe), p. 419.

"The Christian religion has been tried," says Lessing, "for eighteen centuries, the religion of Christ remained to be tried." "I should like to see before I die," writes Thackeray, "and think of it daily more and more, the commencement of Jesus Christ's Christianism in the world." "Christianity played out!" cries Professor Blackie, "it has not been played in yet."

It is one of the most inspiring signs of the times in which we live that the person of Christ is occupying so much attention, and that earnest men, when minor questions threaten to absorb them, are more and more hearing His voice as He says, "What is that to thee? follow thou Me." "It is certainly not too much to say, He is to-day more studied and better known as He was and as He lived, than at any period between now and the first age of the Church." [1]

We are now in a position to indicate what is to be understood in these pages by the 'Christian religion.' By 'religion' is meant 'righteousness,' the hunger and thirst after the realization of the sum of what God requires of us; the yearning for the fulfilment in the light of God's countenance of all our duties to God, to man, to self. To be a religious man is "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our

[1] *Christ in Modern Theology* (Fairbairn), p. 3.

God."[1] "It is to live soberly,—fulfilling our duties towards self; righteously,—fulfilling our duties towards others; and godly,[2]—fulfilling our duties towards God. It reasons of "righteousness, temperance (self-control), and judgment to come."[3] 'Religion' also means 'fruit,' the ripest, mellowest product of the entire nature, grown in congenial soil, and nurtured by the sunshine of the Divine Presence, and giving itself in help and blessing to men. And by 'religion' is meant, finally, a newly-created manhood, which involves putting off all that mars our development, and putting on everything that conduces towards its perfection. And by 'Christian religion' we are to understand such Righteousness, Fruit, New-Manhood, "according to Christ Jesus," modelled and fashioned after His example, and daily controlled, guided, and inspired by His Spirit. The Christian religion seeks, in a word, to bring all the material of thought, feeling, volition, action, all the warp and woof of life, under the redeeming and regulating influence of the personality of Jesus of Nazareth, that, led by Him into the presence of God we might there, lost in wonder, love, and praise, "grow up unto Him in all things." The motto of the Christian religion is,—Let every faculty and power effulge, touched with the fire of Christ's gracious

[1] Micah vi. 8. [2] Titus ii. 12. [3] Acts xxiv. 25.

power. It leads to the entire dedication of all our energies to Him as our ever-present Saviour and Lord, that beneath His influence, and under the impulse of the self-surrender which it evokes, we may strive for the prize of a Christlike disposition, character, and life. Such is the ideal of the religion which the New Testament sets before us.

But this conception of Christianity has been concealed from numbers of men. It has not met the eye, more especially, of a certain class of its opponents. "Nowhere yet," it has been affirmed, "does the aim exist to produce the best human being possible; to train all the faculties of the body, the mind, and the heart with the sole object of making the most of them."[1] Nowhere does the aim exist? Why, such a man as the Apostle Paul had no other aim before him! Had this author never read such words as these: "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"?[2] Or the passages already quoted, "Till we all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"; "put on the new man created after God in righteousness and true holiness"; and many others of a like import?

[1] *The Service of Man*, p. 270. [2] 1 Thessalonians v. 23.

It is true that we do not always find such a lofty aim as this held up in popular representations of Christianity; but listen to its true voice, and we shall find that its call is,—Follow Him, be like Him, who is still being brought forward even by the opponents of the system which bears His name, with the cry, "Behold the man!" Behold with open face the glory of this thy soul's Lord, till thou art "changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."[1] This is the call of Christianity, pure and undefiled, that rings out above every other cry. And this is the idea of it held from the beginning. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son."[2]

There are many advantages which would accrue from the acceptance of this definition of the 'Christian Religion.' Some of them will be dealt with afterwards. Meanwhile I would point to the help it gives to lift us above the range of the controversies that have raged round Christianity. When Christ is lifted up He "draws all men unto Him,"—even the rejecters of ecclesiastical Christianity. "It is difficult," says one who represents that class which has no sympathy with the dogmatisms of the Church, "without exhausting

[1] 2 Corinthians iii. 18. [2] Romans viii. 29.

superlatives, even to unexpressive and wearisome satiety, to do justice to our intense love, reverence, and admiration for the character and teaching of Jesus. We regard him not as the perfection of the intellectual or philosophic mind, but as the perfection of the spiritual character; as surpassing all men at all times in the closeness and depth of his communion with the Father. In reading his sayings, we feel that we are holding converse with the wisest, purest, noblest Being that ever clothed thought in the poor language of humanity. In studying his life, we feel that we are following the footsteps of the highest ideal yet presented to us upon earth."[1] But the essence of Christianity consists in the attempt to follow the footsteps of this highest ideal, and anything which does not conduce to this is indifferent to it.

How, again, could it be possible to say of any man who professes such a religion that he has suffered through it?[2] Fill the word religion with its true contents. Try to say that a man suffers through the longing for the righteousness of God; through the fruit of the Holy Spirit; through his efforts to reach up to Christ-like new-manhood. How absurd does the language appear!

[1] *Creed of Christendom* (W. R. Greg), p. 228.
[2] See p. 32.

It will be our endeavour then, in our quest for the central idea of religion, to go back along the stream of Christian thought and action, past all Church councils and creeds; all ecclesiastical rules and practices; all ritual observances; all the early fathers; yes, and even past the apostles themselves, till we find ourselves drawing the living water from the great Fountain Head itself. The clear first fact we have to deal with, and from which all the rest depends, is that the life of Jesus Christ was meant to be the only pattern of the lives of all who call themselves Christians; that it is in His words that there is to be found the ultimate authority, and in His spirit the breath that is to infuse life into the religion which goes by His name.

CHAPTER III

THE ROOT-IDEA

Now we are in the presence of Christ. Is it possible for us to lay our finger on the quintessence of His system, the groundwork of His teaching, the beating heart of the manifold activities of Christian doctrine and practice? Can we reach some one fundamental conception of which all who name His name will be constrained to say,—Lo this is the root of all? Our faith in the existence of the one amongst the many, and our yearning to discover it, grow with the themes on which we are engaged. They are greatest where the soul is most vitally interested. Are they likely to be gratified, we ask, in the highest region of all? Is there any hope of reaching a central point in which the righteousness, the fruit, the new-manhood "according to Christ Jesus," which constitute the final goal of true religion,

receive at once their explanation and their inspiration?

It will not do, as we saw, for any individual Christian to fix for himself on such a leading idea, for others might disagree with him on the point, and the endless dispute break out afresh. We must get Jesus Himself to disclose it. We cannot doubt that He held in His mind the entire scope of His teaching in a form that could have enabled Him to express its innermost essence in brief compass if He would. Did He ever do this? Did He ever let any of His hearers into the final great secret of true religion?

We find in examining the gospel record that He was pressed on more than one occasion to give a deliverance on this matter. Let us glance at the words in which this fact is recorded. They are contained in the first three Gospels.

"But when the Pharisees had heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second

is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."[1]

"And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto Him, Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth; for there is one God; and there is none other but He; and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask Him any question."[2]

"And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and

[1] Matthew xxii. 34-40. [2] Mark xii. 28-34.

tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live."[1]

The three narratives in which these words are embedded are regarded by some as being merely different versions of the same incident. The third evangelist, in whose account considerable variations are found, has taken, it is said, the question with which the incident begins, from the other Gospels, and has then himself constituted it into an introduction to the parable of the good Samaritan. Others, on the contrary, think they can recognize three separate incidents.

A careful examination of the passages would seem to lead to the conclusion that the first two evangelists are depicting the same scene; and that Luke is describing an incident which took place at an earlier date in Christ's ministry.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is in Jerusalem. It had been a day of questions. The enemies of

[1] Luke x. 25-28.

our Lord had set on Him, and plied Him with many puzzling and captious queries. And He had answered them in such a masterly fashion, that the people were lost in amazement, and His foes put to silence. At last a lawyer[1] steps forward and puts what proved to be the last question of that day, and which, one can well believe, will prove the great final question till the end of time: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"

In Mark's Gospel the circumstances under which the question is put are the same as those in Matthew's account, only that the interrogator is now called "one of the scribes."[2]

In Luke both time and place are different. It is shortly after the return of the seventy disciples, and therefore comparatively early in Christ's public ministry; whereas in Matthew and Mark the incident is represented as occurring near its close. Jesus also is in Galilee, not at Jerusalem. Moreover, the question itself in Luke's narrative differs from those recorded in the other two Gospels. It is now a practical one. "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" In Matthew and Mark it is a speculative one: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"[3] "Which

[1] εἷς ἐξ αὐτῶν νομικος. [2] εἷς τῶν γραμματέων.
[3] Διδάσκαλε, ποία ἐντολὴ μεγάλη ἐν τῷ νόμῳ.

is the first commandment of all?"[1] Again, in Matthew, Jesus is represented as answering the question Himself, and there is nothing said as to whether the reply commended itself to His questioner or not. In Luke, on the other hand, Christ draws forth the answer from His interlocutor, for to the question, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" the lawyer answering, said, "Thou shalt love . . . ." To this response Jesus gives an emphatic endorsement, "And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live."

In Mark's Gospel, whilst Jesus Himself furnishes the reply, there is, at the same time, such a spontaneous and hearty response on the part of the scribe, that our Lord turns to him and says, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

Taking these three narratives together there are several points in them that demand our attention.

We have here an inquiry into the essence of religion, both on the doctrinal and practical sides. The questioners go to the marrow of the subject. They have the feeling that there is a single root-idea, out of which all that we call religion springs —a supreme commandment—one thing to learn, and one thing to do; and they ask, "What is it?"

[1] ποία ἐστὶ πρώτη πασῶν ἐντολή.

The question is answered by Him who claimed to represent God, and who is regarded, even by those who cannot go the length of acknowledging His divinity, as opening up to us, as no one else has ever done, the heart of the Eternal.

But the answer is also that of man himself. "How readest thou?" asks Jesus. How readest thou thy sacred books? How readest thou thine own heart? What is the answer that thou, O man, findest there as to what constitutes the vital substance of religion?

The answer, when returned by Christ, commends itself to the reason and conscience of man, and meets with the hearty assent of all his powers, "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth."

The answer, when returned by man, is endorsed with all earnestness by our Lord, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live."

The precept, unfolded and emphasized by Jesus, and accepted by His hearer, is exhaustive in its requirements. We cannot think of one that will cover more ground. It places man before the three great provinces in which the soul lives and moves and has its being—God, neighbour, self. It makes a positive demand on his powers. It is no longer "thou shalt not" do this or that, as in

the old law, but "thou shalt" love; thou shalt live to give and to bless.

In demanding love, this supreme commandment asks for the ultimate passion of the soul. "This very love is thy life, thy root, the seat, the central part of thy being" (*Fichte*). "The essence of Christianity is placed in love, and love is made the touchstone of character, the arbiter of destiny. A loftier ideal of judge and judgment it is not possible to conceive."[1]

And this supreme law calls for this love at its fullest, and purest, and best. It is not the weak love of sentiment, nor the fiery and turgid stream of passion; it is not a mere emotion, effeminate and enervating, a sign and a cause of weakness; but it is love conceived of as "an enlightened, masculine, resolute, and supreme regard to the rights of God and the true interests of our fellowmen." It is a love in which all the highest faculties and powers take an active and intelligent part. Thou shalt love God with thy heart,[2]—the seat and centre of man's personal life; and with thy soul,[3]—the vital force of that life which animates the body; and with thy mind,[4]—the full activity of thy thinking; and with thy strength,[5]—the complete energy of thy

[1] *The Kingdom of God* (Bruce), p. 176.
[2] καρδία. [3] ψυχή. [4] διανοία. [5] ἰσχύς.

will. Thou shalt love with the gathered forces of thy nature, and with these excited to their utmost intensity, with *all* thy heart and soul and mind and strength.

The precept which Jesus makes so prominent demands individual effort and consecration. It is not regarded as general in its scope and application, but is made of particular application. Thou, each man for himself, shalt love; thou shalt see to it that thou thyself comest into the closest relationship to God. Thou shalt not hand this matter over to any agency or individual, any church or priest; but thou thyself shalt take thy stand where there is nought between thee the child, and the Heavenly Father; and between thee the brother, and all thy brethren. The entire inner man, the faculties of thought, and feeling, and volition, permeated, and saturated, and possessed, by a regnant love to God and to man. Such is the demand that is made of the individual soul here.

And this demand of Jesus not only includes within its wide embrace the whole nature of man; it sums up in itself all the moral glory of the past. It includes in its compass all the provisions and arrangements which God has furnished, framed, and put in operation in days gone by, for securing right dispositions and right living among men. "On

these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." The phrase "law and prophets" is meant to cover not merely the Mosaic law, and the writings of the Hebrew prophets, but whatever in outward legal requirements, as in the inward promptings of man's "prophetic soul," has pointed in the direction of the fulfilment of the will of God. Love constitutes the active principle of all such, their spirit, their life, the determination of their moral nature and contents. Love is the staple from which depends each link of that golden chain of law and prophecy, which, down through the generations, has helped man to live a higher life. Were it withdrawn the whole chain would fall to the ground a shapeless mass.

And as love is the grace which sums up the strength and glory of past religious and moral thought and effort, so is it the one force that is sure of the future. There is in it the element of absoluteness which ensures for it eternal existence. Many things which now appear to be firm and stable shall cease to be; but love shall remain, nay, shall be found to issue from out the ordeal of time and change more resplendent than ever.

The keeping of this two-fold commandment answers all the great questions of life, such as,—How shall a man learn to be at one with himself, with his

fellowman, and with God? He who wishes to reduce to subjection, to range, in order and beauty, the conflicting elements within his own breast, to live peaceably with all men, to have every hindrance between his spirit and God removed, must learn to love. This love alone can command all the uses of the soul. "The whole nature follows love. Whithersoever it goes all the faculties troop after it. It is the magnet of human nature; where the heart is, there are all the treasures of mind and will, and moral nature." [1]

Coming back once more to the name 'The Christian Religion,' we have found it to signify the science and art of helping man to attain to the righteousness of God; to the richest fruit of the Holy Spirit; to perfect manhood;—all this being after the pattern of Jesus Christ, and in the power of His Spirit. We now discover that its one all embracing law is, "Thou shalt love." 'The Christian religion,' regarded objectively, will now therefore be held to mean, Jesus Christ evidently set forth, crucified among us. It is the revelation by His cross and passion of that love of God which passeth knowledge, which is the one great energizing factor in the creation and development of our love to Him. "We love Him because He first loved us." It is the

[1] *Freedom of Faith* (Munger), p. 126.

announcement of the removal of all obstacles to the free forthcoming of infinite mercy and loving-kindness to sinful men, and a winning call to become reconciled to a Father who waits to be gracious. 'The Christian religion,' further, is Jesus Christ enunciating, unfolding, driving home on the mind, conscience, and heart of humanity, the necessity of keeping the great two-fold commandment, in order to produce the finest specimens of redeemed and sanctified human nature. And, regarded subjectively, 'the Christian Religion' will be held to mean that *absolute personal surrender*, which goes by the name of Faith, and which opens up the soul to Him, its rightful Lord, who, as the new and living way to the Father, leads it to God, the very centre and source of all quickening and sanctifying influence.

There remain still one or two points in connection with this great law which require to be noticed. Love is bidden to go out in two directions. Thou shalt love thy God; thou shalt love thy neighbour. But it is to be observed, that there is a third sphere in which love moves, and one which plays an important part in the moral training of man. When Jesus brings forward the old yet ever new commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," a self-love is indicated, a legitimate self-love, a

love of self which is indeed as obligatory on us as love to God or love to man.

Now it is necessary to be clear as to the relative values and positions of these three 'loves.' There will be no dispute among Christians with regard to the high place that must be assigned to the first. Thou shalt love God supremely. That command is borne in upon us with constant iteration by the word of revelation and the voice of conscience. The third love, again, at least in its first crude form, needs no teaching. It is instinctive. Man naturally gives a large place to self in his thoughts and affections. What is chiefly needed is to purge and purify this self-love, and direct it aright.

The second 'love,' however, needs to be dealt with. The position it occupies in the passages already quoted is a remarkable one. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it,[1] Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The Greek adjective translated 'like,' signifies 'equal to,' 'on a par with,' 'of similar rank,' 'held in like esteem.' The word is used of those citizens in Greek aristocratic states who had common

[1] Δευτέρα δὲ ὁμοία αὐτῇ.

rights, and were equally eligible to hold state offices. Meyer renders the phrase, "A second is like unto it, not less great, quite as important and fundamental."[1] "The *second*," says Stier, "not merely follows the *first*, but is *like* unto it. Properly ὁμοία ejusdem indolis, *of the same nature and origin*, quite as fundamental and comprehensive. . . . The law is not an aggregate of all sorts of requirements: 'Thou shalt do this and that, and not do this and that!' as is the false conception of many people even at this day, but a living organism; as a whole (ὁλός ὁ νόμος) it is one *in these two* commandments, which are themselves again one through the one *love* of the whole heart towards God and our neighbour, towards our neighbour for God's sake."[2] Or take, one of the latest deliverances on the point, "Jesus, however, wished emphatically to bring out the close and essential connection of the two commands, and to repudiate the idea of a merely subordinate significance of the Divine command in regard to our conduct to our fellowmen. Certainly He did not mean that these two connected commands of love to God and our neighbour merely stood at the top of a series of commandments, the others

[1] "Also eben so principal und grundlegend."

[2] *The Words of the Lord Jesus* (Stier), Vol. III., p. 182 (Clark).

of which had an independent though inferior significance. On the contrary, He regarded these two commands as a compendium of the *whole* law of God. They were first, because they were the most comprehensive, and formed the essence and kernel of all the others, which were but deductions from them."[1]

The two commands then are of equal rank and value, and together they form the substance of all rules, maxims, laws. *And they are always regarded as one, and inseparable.* Thus Jesus says to the lawyer after his enunciation of them both, "This (not these) do, and thou shalt live." In the same strain the Apostle John says, "And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment";[2] and again, "And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."[3] They are not to be thought of apart from one another. The idea of a service of man separate from the service of God, or of a service of God cut off from the service of man, would have been to the mind of Jesus and His apostles inconceivable. The two are one;

[1] *The Teaching of Jesus* (Wendt), Vol. I., p. 325 (Clark's trans.).

[2] 1 John iii. 23. [3] 1 John iv. 21.

and what God hath joined together let not man put asunder.

We cannot study the Gospels without perceiving that the second commandment is lifted on to a much higher plane than it had ever occupied before, and, we might add, than it has usually occupied since, in theological systems and Christian communities. We find Jesus on other occasions besides those already referred to, directing special attention to it. Thus He brings it impressively before His disciples as a new commandment, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another."[1] The commandment as to its letter was not new. The Apostle John says of it, "And now, I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another."[2] And again, "This is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."[3] We shall see afterwards more fully wherein this newness consists. We shall only say here that it was a new thing then, as it is to many still, to give a religious sanction to what was regarded as only of moral significance; to bind up thus indissolubly the service of man with the service of God.

[1] John xiii. 34. [2] 2 John 5. [3] 1 John iii. 11.

Jesus says again, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."[1] My commandment! the commandment which I am the first to make absolutely binding; the commandment by which I would be distinctively known; by which My teaching is to be marked off from that of all others. Jesus could not have meant that He alone of all those who had taught men had inculcated the maxim that they should love one another. What He meant was, that He wished to bring this command into such special prominence, to give it such high sanction, and to impart to men such a longing for its realization, and such power to fulfil their desire, that ever afterwards it should be associated with His name and with His work. In verse 17 of this same chapter, again Jesus says, "These things I command you, that ye love one another." *These* things, that ye love! There is but this one thing to be done. Through all thy works and ways let love shine.

Our Lord's life consists mainly in a keeping of His own new commandment. Its motto is "The Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."[2] Its pervading spirit of lowly service manifests itself most brilliantly at the close of His

[1] John xv. 12. [2] Matthew xx. 28.

earthly ministry, when, in the upper room at Jerusalem, He girt a towel round Him, and knelt at the feet of His disciples to perform what was regarded as the most menial form of service. From that moving scene there comes the cry which should be a stimulus to all Christian conduct, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."[1]

[1] John xiii. 14.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROYAL LAW—IN THE EPISTLES

WHEN we pass from the Gospels to the Epistles, from the words of the Master to those of His servants, we find the same anxiety shown to raise to the very highest place the second commandment. Speaking generally, one cannot fail to mark the change in the moral atmosphere, the raising of the moral temperature, which is experienced when he passes from the Old Testament to the New. The difference between them, so far as the filial spirit is concerned, has frequently been noticed. But this is perhaps even more marked in regard to the fraternal spirit. As we approach the New Testament it is like coming into a warmer clime, and breathing a balmier air. Summer skies are overhead, and the fruit hangs low in rich clusters from the tree of righteousness. How frequent in the Epistles, as compared with the psalms or

prophetic books, is the use of terms of fraternal endearment. 'Brethren,' 'beloved,' 'my dearly beloved.' You search in vain for such expressions in the Old Testament Scriptures.

And, looking more closely into the matter, we find that all the New Testament writers agree in placing love to one's neighbour in a supreme position. "If the mind is carried backwards and concentrated on the first period of the religious movement which began in the early centuries of our era, it will be noticed that there was one feature which stood out with great prominence. It is a matter beyond question that this movement involved from its inception the very highest conception of the Altruistic ideal to which the human mind has in any general sense ever attained. At this distance of time this characteristic is still unmistakable. 'Any impartial observer,' says Mr. Lecky, 'would describe the most distinctive virtue referred to in the New Testament as love, charity, or philanthropy.' It is the spirit of charity, pity, and infinite compassion which breathes through the Gospels. The new religion was, at the outset, actually and without any figurative exaggeration what the same writer has called it elsewhere, 'a proclamation of the universal brotherhood of man.'"[1]

[1] *Social Evolution* (Kidd), p. 149.

"There is in the New Testament no other word so constantly used, so common to all the disciples, so expressive of the spirit of the ethics of the Master, as the word which was made the greatest in St. Paul's Epistle, and which is repeated, like the key-note of a song, in the Epistles of John."[1]

Now, the Epistles and, more especially, those of the Apostle Paul, have been used to build up huge doctrinal systems. They have been the quarry out of which the stones have been hewn for the massive dogmas of election, predestination, justification, adoption, the Trinity, and others. It is popularly supposed that this doctrinal material constitutes the chief element in the apostolic writings.

One can rejoice in the stimulus which has been given to the thought of the Church by this treatment of the New Testament writings; whilst at the same time venturing to wonder, why more has not been made of that ethical material which is so abundant, but which has to a large extent been neglected or very slightly treated in theological treatises and systems.

On the subject of the exalted place of the second commandment the apostles are of one heart and one mind.

[1] *Christian Ethics* (N. Smyth), p. 223.

There is a classification of New Testament writers which has met with somewhat wide acceptance. It bases itself on what is regarded as the general tone of their writings. Thus Peter is called the apostle of Hope, which means, not that the others do not give any place to this grace in their teaching; but that it comes out more fully and more clearly in the writings of the apostle of the circumcision than in the rest. Paul is spoken of, after the same fashion, as the apostle of Faith; James, as the apostle of Works; John, as the apostle of Love. Now, whilst this classification may serve a useful purpose in indicating certain tendencies of thought and feeling in these inspired men, the fact must never be lost sight of, that there is a higher classification under which they are all seen to be united. There is amongst them perfect agreement as to the indisputed sovereignty of love. They are all *primarily* apostles of Love, and only *secondarily* apostles of Hope, and Faith, and Works.

Take the Epistles of Paul. In the Epistle to the Romans we read, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another, for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou

shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."[1] Again, to the Galatians he writes: "All the law" (meaning not merely the Mosaic law, but law regarded absolutely, law as written not on tables of stone, but on the fleshly table of the heart); "all the law[2] is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "A theology," says Luther, "the briefest, yet the most extensive, the briefest so far as pertains to the words and sentiments; but as to its use, and to the thing itself, longer, profounder, and more sublime than the whole world."[3]

Again, in writing to Timothy, Paul says: "The end of the commandment[4] (the scope, the final purpose of it, the goal towards which it reaches forth) is charity (ἀγαπὴ) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." Law is meaningless, purposeless, it has no course to shape for itself, no end to pursue, without

[1] Romans xiii. 8, 9. [2] ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος, Galatians v. 14.

[3] Meyer, in commenting on this passage, speaks of "the lofty spiritual level from which St. Paul looked down and saw all other commands of the law so far subordinated to love, that whoever had fulfilled this command must be treated as having fulfilled the whole."

[4] τὸ δὲ τέλος τῆς παραγγελίας, 1 Tim. i. 5.

love. Love gives to law direction, impulse, significance.

To love is assigned the central position in the Christian life; it is the distinctive peculiarity of the believer. He is to "walk according to charity."[1]

"Put on therefore," Paul says to the Colossians, "as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And *above all these things* put on charity which is the bond of perfectness,"[2] "the power which unites and holds together those graces and virtues which together make up perfection. Outside love there is no perfection; in love each element has its *conditio sine quâ non*."[3]

But the passage which shows most clearly the unique position assigned by Paul to the second commandment is the thirteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians. In this chapter you have the apostle's whole being uttering itself in language as rich and glowing as ever welled forth from the heart of man. A brief glance at its contents is all

[1] κατὰ ἀγάπην περιπάτειν.

[2] ἥτις ἐστὶ σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος, Coloss. iii. 12-14.

[3] Lightfoot *in loc.*

that is attempted here. More is not required, seeing that every thoughtful reader of the New Testament has been drawn towards it, and has made his own analysis of it.

Its theme throughout is the supremacy, the surpassing glory of love. In the opening verses it is declared that the gifts which are held in highest esteem among men are of no value without love. There is eloquence, both human and angelic; the prophetic afflatus with its profound stretches of imaginative power, which enables men to pierce into the most inscrutable mysteries; knowledge unfolding all its stores; boundless faith, before whose sublime energy every obstacle gives way; fiery zeal that is ready to make the most splendid personal sacrifices; and benevolence that is prepared to give all its goods to feed the poor; take any of these apparently great and noble gifts and graces, take all of them together, and without love they are nothing.

The apostle then proceeds to open up the *contents* of love in order to show what moral and spiritual treasures are hid in it, and grow out of it, as leaf and bud and blossom and fruit grow out of a stem that is full of sap. It is a wonderful catalogue of virtues and excellencies. There is what once was called longanimity,—"Love suffereth long"; kindness,—"and is kind"; generosity,—"love envieth

not"; humility,—"vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up"; good breeding,—"love doth not behave herself unseemly"; altruism,—"seeketh not her own"; good temper,—"love is not easily provoked"; unsuspiciousness,—"thinketh no evil"; sincerity,—"love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

Then, love is exhibited as being *put to the test*, and shown to come out victorious from the severest ordeal. "Love beareth all things"; and when things are past bearing "she believeth all things"; and when faith even the strongest is obliged to falter, she "hopeth all things"; and, finally, when hope deferred tends to make the heart sick, she "endureth all things."

In still another way Paul shows love to be the highest good. It is marked as no other thing is by the great qualities of *permanence and completeness.* Other things will change, or will finally cease altogether, but "love never faileth." "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail." The age of prophecy itself ends, or the prophecies themselves end through being fulfilled. "Whether there be tongues, they shall cease." What are called tongues (and it is a matter of controversy as to what is meant by the name) ceased immediately after the apostolic age; and attempts in modern times, as in the case of the disciples of Edward Irving, to revive them, have been

futile. "Whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away." How quickly does what men call knowledge grow old and disappear? What has become of the philosophy and science of Paul's own day? Where are many of the more modern views of the world and explanations of the universe? Is there not some force in Hegel's biting phrase, that the feet of those that carried out its predecessor to its burial will be found at the door of each boasted system of knowledge, ready to bear it away.

And there is not only this sense of want of permanence, but there is a consciousness of incompleteness to contend against, outside the province of love. We are peering through a horn window that dims and distorts everything we look at; we are acting the part of children occupied with childish things. But love remains, and love makes us content. There will come a time when Faith and Hope and Love will form the only abiding realities. And then, too, Love shall show herself supreme.

And so the apostle, glancing with eagle eye over the whole realm of knowledge and feeling and action, taking in both heaven and earth, eternity and time, points to the one element which gives grace and glory to human existence both here and hereafter. It is Love.

Thus, strangely enough, it is the apostle of Faith,

and not the apostle of Love, who gives us the most rapturous panegyric on Love that is to be found in all literature.

Many other passages might easily be added to this great chapter to show what strong emphasis the Apostle Paul is always placing on love. In the Epistles of the Captivity, the product of the ripest years of his life, one comes across windows, so to speak, through which a glance can be had, at once into Paul's own great heart, and into the essence of the Christian Religion. These passages take the form of prayers and supplications, with thanksgiving. And they have all the same burden, letting us see that the commandment which in one breath enjoins love to God and love to man, occupies the foremost place in the apostle's mind.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians he writes, "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."[1] To the Philippians he says, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge[2] (knowledge in its complete form), and in all judgment."[3] He prays that love, the ripened glory of their inward

[1] Ephesians i. 15.

[2] Philippians i. 9-11; *ἐπιγνώσις*.

[3] *αἰσθήσις*.

nature, may grow, and still grow on till it acquires a deep and wide acquaintance with the great principles which regulate human existence, and at the same time, a delicate discernment that shall guide it in dealing with each of the details of daily life . . . to the end (that ye may be thoroughly religious?) that ye may be "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." To the saints and faithful brethren which are at Colosse he writes, "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Jesus Christ, and of the love which ye have to all the saints."[1] In his letter to "Philemon, our dearly beloved and fellow-labourer," Paul exclaims, "I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus and toward all saints."[2]

Faith and love, love and faith, the fulfilment of the great two-fold commandment, that is what Paul yearns and prays for when he thinks of men; that is what he rejoices over with joy unspeakable and full of glory, when it appears among his hearers; for through that he hopes to see his one desire and prayer to God for them answered, *viz.* that they should be filled with the "fruits of righteous-

[1] Colossians i. 3. [2] Philemon 4, 5.

ness"; that he may be able "to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

Compare with these passages what he says to the Thessalonians, "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love toward one another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: *to the end that He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness* before God, even our Father, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."[1] Love is the path that leads to holiness.

Turn from individual passages, and examine each Epistle of Paul as a whole. The occasion of the writing of not a few of them was the springing up of that exclusive spirit, which interferes so much with the keeping of the second commandment in its entirety. In a suggestive passage, for example, in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, he deals with this spirit in its more general form, and introduces Jesus as treading down the Chel, or low wall of partition, which separated the Jewish court from the Gentile in the temple. And[2] in the same Epistle he speaks of "the mystery which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God," "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel."[3]

[1] 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13. [2] Ephesians ii. 14. [3] Ephesians iii. 6.

One half, indeed, of that marvellous store of wisdom and of knowledge which was hid in Christ, consisted in a series of revelations, tending to show that Gentile and Jew were to be made one new man, so making peace.[1] And the other half was that series of revelations by word and deed, which showed that, through Christ as, the open door which no man can shut, Jew and Gentile were, hand in hand, to seek and to obtain access by one spirit unto the Father, or (with the quick change of metaphor which is so characteristic of the apostle) were to be built up together, side by side, layer on layer, "for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

The fact is thus continually brought before us that the apostle held the two parts of the commandment in indivisible union in his mind. He never imagined the one without the other. And his soul was fired with the grand conception of the brotherhood of all men, and the acknowledgment by all of the Divine Fatherhood. He was consequently intensely jealous of any attempts to continue the distinctions which Christ had come to abolish.

These attempts were being made on all sides. In every church he formed, he had the national and ceremonial exclusiveness of his own countrymen to contend against. The cry continued to be raised,

[1] Ephesians ii. 15.

that the Jew stood on a higher platform than the Gentile, and that the latter must conform to Jewish laws and practices before he could be acknowledged as a brother. This spirit showed itself in its most pronounced form in the Galatian Church, where a violent effort was put forth to make Jewish ceremonies, and more especially the rite of circumcision, a *sine quâ non* of Christian fellowship.

Again, in addressing the Colossians, the apostle is called upon to struggle against an intellectual and ascetic exclusiveness, which would have confined the precious deposit of the truth to an inner circle of the privileged few. In Corinth, once more, it was party spirit, for which that turbulent city between the two seas was notorious, which, manifesting itself in the Church, threatened to destroy its peace and hinder its growth. Everywhere he is urging his readers to obedience to that second commandment which is like unto the first, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Furthermore, it was the persistent and reiterated promulgation of this great principle which brought down on Paul's head all that fierce and relentless enmity which visited him wherever he went. The announcement that in Christ Jesus "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, male nor

female"[1] formed to the Jews the peculiar offence of his preaching. And if the apostle had only suffered himself to be persuaded to cease proclaiming the truth of the brotherhood of all in Christ, the persecutions would have been greatly diminished in number and in bitterness, if they had not, indeed, ceased altogether.

Peter, the apostle of Hope, is at one with Paul, the apostle of Faith, in putting love in the foremost place in his writings. He brings it in as the chief corner stone of the spiritual edifice, which we behold growing into an holy temple of the Lord in his hands. "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (ἀγαπὴν).[2]

In his first Epistle love occupies a similar position. "The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity covereth a multitude of sins."[3] Again, in the first chapter of this same Epistle, we find that trinity of Christian graces which Paul says remains after many

[1] Colossians iii. 11; Galatians iii. 28.
[2] 2 Peter i. 5-8. [3] 1 Peter iv. 7, 8.

other things that are esteemed more highly among men have vanished away; and with the apostle of the uncircumcision, as with the apostle of the circumcision, "the greatest of these is love"; . . . "that your faith and hope might be in God, Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."[1]

There are two points to note in this passage. (1) That faith and hope are means only, whilst love to the brethren is the end to be aimed at in all Christian thought and effort; and (2) that the true sign of the new birth is this unfeigned love of the brethren.[2] Peter would say with John, "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren."[3]

Peter's key-note is hope, and Paul's is faith; that of James is regarded as works, not works as preceding faith, which is the meaning of the term in Paul's writings where works are contrasted with faith; but works as the natural result, the necessary outcome of faith. But James, like the other New Testament writers, makes out love to be the richest,

[1] 1 Peter i. 21, 22. [2] *Φιλαδελφίαν ἀνυπόκριτον.* [3] 1 John iii. 14.

noblest fruit of the Christian spirit. "If ye fulfil," he says, "the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well."[1] Mark the phrase, "THE ROYAL LAW."[2] It is called such, not because it is given by God, the great King, nor yet because it makes kings, nor because it applies to kings (*i.e.* those who are kings to God), nor because it is a royal road, plain, and straight, and even, as opposed to one that is full of ugly twists and turnings (see Meyer *in loc.*), but because it is the most distinguished, and the most powerful of all laws (*ceterarum legum quasi regina*). Love is Queen. When once she is enthroned in the heart, all the other faculties and powers fall at her feet, and give themselves up without a murmur to her sweet tyranny.

Note, again, such passages as chaps. i. 12 and ii. 5. The apostle here selects, in preference to any other phrase, the formula which occurs frequently in the law and the prophets, "to them that love Him." It is James, as we saw, who speaks of charity as the ritual of the Christian faith.[3] To him "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" shows itself in kindly consideration and respect for the poor.[4] The profitlessness of faith without works is

[1] James ii. 8.
[2] Νόμον βασιλικόν.
[3] James i. 27.
[4] James ii. 1-6.

illustrated by the case of a destitute soul who is mocked by fair words divorced from kindly deeds.[1] The wisdom that is from above is "full of mercy and good fruits."[2] The great denunciation with which the fifth chapter opens is, like Christ's own scathing attack on the Pharisees, directed against men who are breaking that second commandment which is equal to the first,—the rich who keep back by fraud the hire of their labourers, whose cries, nevertheless, "are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth."[3]

His last sentences breathe the heartiest spirit of brotherhood, and point to a kind of covering of sin connected therewith that is too seldom recognized. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."[4]

With regard to the place that the Apostle John gives to love there can be no dispute among readers of his works. The disciple whom Jesus loved, who lay on His breast at supper, whose love alone among all the disciples was strong enough to carry him to the Judgment

[1] James ii. 14-16. [2] James iii. 17. [3] James v. 1-4.
[4] James v. 19, 20.

Hall, and to the Cross; who "came first to the sepulchre"; John whose eye, made clear by love, was the first to discern the Lord as He stood in the grey dawn on the shore of the Galilean sea; John, whose symbol is the eagle, keen to see, swift to obey; John, who, by the alchemy of love, was changed from a son of Thunder into a son of the soft refreshing Dew;—we think of him as pre-eminently the apostle of love. His Epistles are electrically charged with love from beginning to end. Love to God, love to man in linked sweetness and power is the ever-recurring note of his Epistles.

It is not possible to enter into a full examination of separate passages bearing upon this theme. One only will be referred to in the connection in which we are placing him. In his first Epistle he writes, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we received from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."[1] Mark the necessary bond that is established here between the first and second commandment in Christ's central law. Love to the brethren

[1] 1 John iv. 20, 21.

is shown to be "organically and internally bound up with love to God. The apostle here assumes that God offers Himself to us in the persons of men who bear His image engraven upon them. St. John means no more than that he makes a vain boast who professes to love God while he neglects God's image before his eyes" (Calvin).

It is interesting to see how the sentiments of the apostle are finding their echo in the latest development of that modern school of theological thought, which has chosen the novel as its channel of communication. "And *now* it is daylight-plain to me that in the simplest act of loving self-surrender there is the germ of all faith, the essence of all lasting religion. Quicken human service, purify and strengthen human love, and have no fear but that the conscience will find its God! For all the time this quickening and this purification are His work in thee. Around thee are the institutions, the ideals, the knowledge and beliefs, ethical or intellectual, in which that work, that life, have been so far fragmentarily and partially realized. Submit thyself and press forward. Thou knowest well what it means to be *better:* more pure, more loving, more self-denying. And in thy struggle to be all these, God cometh to thee and abides. . . . *But the greatest of these is love.*[1]

[1] *David Grieve* (Mrs. Ward), pp. 552-3.

Here we have "a conception of Christianity in which you discern once more its lasting validity and significance, its imperishable place in human life." [1]

There is, then, absolute unanimity among New Testament writers on the subject of the unique pre-eminence of love. Paul, Peter, James, John, though they may appear at times to regard other parts of the Christian revelation from slightly varying points of view, agree, and agree enthusiastically, in crowning love Lord of all. The new commandment of Jesus is recognized by them all as the outstanding ethical law of the New Dispensation. The cold, dead rock is smitten by the rod of Christ, and lo! there gushes forth the health-giving stream. And it became one of the chief tasks of the apostles to direct the attention of men to its sparkling waters, and to furnish channels for its entrance into their hearts. Limited before in its range, regarded as subsidiary both as to its place and function, and endowed with but a feeble authority, Love now ascends the throne and grasps the sceptre, and looking out over the world, aims at bringing every thought of every individual into captivity to its regnant influence.

Now, the question that confronts us is, Has this point received, in what has called itself the Christian Religion, the same amount of attention, the same

[1] *Ibid.*

degree of emphasis as is given to it in apostolic literature? Has the voice of the Church ever rung out clearly and unmistakably the cry, "Above all, love." "The greatest is love?" Has love at all times been regarded as the girdle that is to hold together all other things connected with Christian doctrine and life? Has the second commandment been invariably recognized as equal to the first, and indissolubly bound up with it?

He would be a bold man who, in the light of the stormy past, would give an affirmative answer to these questions. There cannot, indeed, be imagined a greater contrast between two things which profess to be derived from the same source than the sentiments that have largely prevailed in the Church, and those which rule in the New Testament.

Speaking generally, it has been barren intellectual assent to abstract theological dogmas which has been made supreme in Christendom. And when we look more closely into the so-called history of Christianity, which is more frequently, not the story of Christ's religion, but of the evil passions or the intellectual vagaries of men, we find that almost every age and section of the Church has been distinguished for raising something different from love into the dominant place. "Above all," it is said, "put on this view or that, this opinion or that, this

ism or that, this rite or that"; nay, has not the cry that has at times excited most attention in certain quarters been,—"Put on this or that outward garb, bring in this or that piece of ecclesiastical furniture, or machinery, or millinery; assume this or that position when serving God;—these are the all important matters."

And in putting these on, professing Christians have frequently put off all "bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." With heterodox hearts they have clung to what they regarded as orthodox creeds, or to outward forms, till in the vehemence and clamour, in the fire and earthquake and tempest of controversy, that have been stirred up, the still small voice of Jesus saying, "This is my commandment that ye love one another," has been almost completely drowned.

Now, we need to have presented to us, not what men have regarded as the chief doctrines and practices of Christianity; but rather the materials which are found in the New Testament, ranged in their proper order, each placed in its true relation to the others, each given the exact amount of weight that is accorded it by Jesus Christ Himself and His apostles. And the main task that seems to lie before the Church to-day is to put what Jesus calls "My commandment" in its right place.

CHAPTER V

THE THREE 'LOVES'

WE proceed now to take up and examine more carefully the summary of the law which Jesus puts forth as the supreme norm of the moral life of man.

We have seen that there are three 'loves' indicated in it. On entering upon a closer analysis of its contents, we might begin with love to God as the primary, necessary, and dominant element in religion. We could then go on to the love of our neighbour, and end with the love of self. There is something to be said for this order. We shall, however, for what we deem good reasons, begin with the love of self.

Thou shalt love thyself,—this law we shall take as the first requirement. We have already seen that in issuing the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," Jesus takes a

legitimate self-love for granted. Nay, He not only allows it, He makes it the standard according to which love to our neighbour is to be measured. A man is to love his neighbour as he loves himself, after the same fashion, with the same object in view, with like intensity, so that whatsoever we would that men should do unto us, we are to do also to them. A man must indeed love himself aright in order to love his neighbour aright. There are advantages in commencing with this self-love. There is, for one thing, material to deal with at the very start. Self-love is universal, it is innate, instinctive, it needs no learning. "No man," says the apostle, "ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it."[1] There need be no time lost, therefore, at the outset in laying a foundation for our superstructure. It is laid already deep down in human nature.

Again, while we have this self-love to start with, we have it also to end with. In the ancient arena the starting point was also the goal. It is the same in the Christian *stadium*. It is the primary task of every created thing to make the most of itself, to attain to the fullest development and richest beauty of which it is capable. And on no creature is this great first law of nature

[1] Ephesians v. 29.

so binding as on man, the crown of creation. "Know thyself," came down from heaven, according to Greek tradition. "Love thyself," so as to cherish and realize thy best self, is a command which has made itself heard more or less distinctly in every human soul, but which is borne in anew upon the heart with fresh power by the words and example and spirit of Jesus Christ.

Thou shalt love thyself. Whilst there is an instinctive obedience to this law, self-love is apt to go blindly to work at the first. There are different, and even contradictory ideas, as to the 'self' that is to be loved. There is a lower self and a higher self, a false self and a true self, and according as men hold the one or the other before them does the command act beneficially or harmfully. In the one case there is developed a self-will and selfishness which drag the nature down to ever lower and lower depths; in the other a true self-regard which helps to lift the whole nature up.

Man starts with the lower self. "We are not ourselves," says Vinet, "our true, real selves from the beginning, but only become so by an act of the will, and, therefore, we need to look after ourselves as if we were somebody else." Men are often tempted to believe that the best in

life is to be had by making the lower self the centre of attraction, and causing everything to revolve round it. And there are many who never rise above the influence of this false self-love. Outside the range of their limited ego, they have no love remaining for anything else. Others are arrested by those sayings of Jesus which seem to run directly counter to this first law. For man is exhorted not to love himself, but to 'deny himself,' to 'hate his life,' to 'lose his life.' But as we ponder over such expressions, there dawns upon the soul a vision of the true, the real self, which is not to be denied but gratified, not to be hated but loved, not to be lost but found. And we perceive that this higher self comes to its prime through the denial of the lower self; that self-sacrifice, self-effacement, self-renunciation, mean not self-destruction, but self-realization, self-development, self-culture. We "rise on stepping stones of our dead selves to higher things." What is denied is that which interferes with the growth of the true self, and when the lower is refused and renounced, the higher receives new power.

But the progress and enrichment of this higher self cannot be reached by any merely negative process. It is attained only in so far as the nature comes into close and vital relationship with the

other two spheres,—neighbour and God. In the parable of the prodigal son, our Lord, after describing the career of the profligate, and the sore straits to which he was brought by his folly and sin, says, in describing the turning point of his life, "When he came to himself he said, I will arise and go unto my father, and will say, Father." Up to this point he had been leaving behind him his real self. Now he is being reunited to it, and this blessed reunion is brought about by his return with penitential yearnings to his father, "When he came to himself he said, Father." It might be put conversely,—When he said, 'Father,' he came to himself; and this is probably the real order in the several stages of the process of self-reconstruction.

But there are in reality two prodigal sons in this household. And the other, the elder brother, failed to come to his true self, because he had not the grace to say, 'Brother.' Being unable to say that, he could not enter into full possession of the riches of his true self.

To obtain the best things in ourselves, to unlock and unveil the finest parts of our nature, we must go to God, and we must go to our brethren. Here we find the "large place" in which alone the self that should be loved can obtain room to grow

and reach perfection. And the command is, Thou shalt love this true self, thou shalt keep it before thee, thou shalt see it lying hidden in the regions of God and of neighbour; thou shalt seek to reach it through them, thou shalt not rest satisfied till it is found by thee, enriched with the contents of these fruitful realms. This is the chief duty that man owes both to God and to himself.

It is Jesus Christ who makes this noble self-love possible. He it is who first clearly revealed the intrinsic value of the individual, and disclosed the possibilities that lie unfolded there. He it is who teaches every man not only his need of God, but also his need of his neighbour, and leads him to both. Christ also presents Himself as the type to which each man is to conform. He creates within the dullest soul that looks to Him the hope of being changed into the same image. He sets in operation numberless forces and influences calculated to aid man to reach up to the measure of the stature of His own fulness. He generates an enthusiasm for the highest ideal of manhood, which becomes a dominant factor in the nature, and makes it seem 'sweet reasonableness' to obey the command,—Thou shalt love thyself. How can we do other than love and cherish a self like this!

But the first and greatest commandment is, "Thou

shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." We began with the love of self in order to take first in our inquiry what comes first in nature. But the real beginning is with God. For the doctrine of God constitutes both the foundation stone and the corner stone of all that can be called religion. There is at bottom only one law of life, and that is, Thou shalt love God, thou shalt come into vital and unbroken correspondence with the Father of Spirits. If this union is properly accomplished, all the rest will come right. "Unconditional surrender of himself to God is undoubtedly the essence of all requirements which can be made of man." It is impossible to fulfil the other two commandments without first having this feeling of absolute dependence on God. There is no true self that we can find to love except the ideal self that is born of the Spirit of God, the new creature that throbs with His life, that burns with illimitable desire after His righteousness and holiness.

And, again, "nothing but the reigning love of God can so divest the individual of devotion to his own person, that the ego of his neighbour shall rank in his eyes exactly on the same level as his own."[1] It is impossible, therefore, to attach too much import-

[1] *The Gospel of Luke* (Godet), Vol. II. p. 39 (Clark's trans.).

ance to the doctrine of God. "The moral force and grandeur of religions are, in every case, to be determined by the worthiness of their ideas of God, His nature, and His attributes. It has been frequently said, 'As man is, so is the deity he worships'; but the converse is more rigorously correct: what God is, such His worshipper becomes. If the sacred institutes of any people manifest a disposition to obscure the unity of God, to tamper with His holiness, to waver in their statements touching His essential independence of the properties of matter or of man, that system has been incapacitated in the same proportion for directing and exalting the religious life of the community."[1]

And it is not only religions that are thus affected; civilizations as well are made to differ by the ideas of God which prevail amongst men, rising or falling, as these are clear, and pure, and true; or dim, corrupted, and false. Right thoughts of God are the seeds out of which all genuine righteousness, fruit, and manhood spring.

It is of the first importance, therefore, that we arrive at a true and adequate conception of God. Without this, that first commandment, obedience to which is the basis of all true life, cannot be fulfilled. If we are to love God with the accumulated powers

[1] *Christ and Other Masters* (Hardwick), Vol. I. p. 86.

of our nature, working with their intensest energy, we must have presented to us a God whom we can love after this absolute fashion.

But nowhere is there such a bewildering variety of views as on the very theme on which it is so necessary to arrive at clearness and unanimity. Carry the term "God" back through the past ages; bear it with you throughout the world to-day, and see how conflicting are the ideas and images it conjures up, from the vision of the one true, holy, loving Father of the Christian, to the lowest type of deity of the fetish worshipper.

And with what varying degrees of belief is the great name received among men. "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." The wise say "God is all in all," "in Him we live and move and have our being." There is the agnostic, who says,—"We do know that we do not, or that we cannot, know Him"; and there is the true Christian gnostic who says, "We do know that we know Him."

What various emotions, further, does the thought of God call forth! In some it creates a paralysing dread; in others that "perfect love that casteth out fear." The savage devotee of nature religion is on the most familiar terms with his deities, and does not scruple to visit them at times with condign punishment; the Christian cannot approach his God

without the deepest reverence. The profane man daily takes the divine name in vain; the devout hallows it in his inmost heart.

Nor is this variety in the conception and treatment of God found among those only who do not possess a common religious book, such as the Bible. Persons who have in their hands the same revelation have shown the most perplexing diversity of view. Are there not well-authenticated accounts of men professing the same Christian religion differing so much in their theological views as to say to one another "Your God is my devil." [1]

Every man is tempted to view God from his own standpoint. Conceptions of God have been influenced by almost all the things which touch the nature and the life of man. It was said of the ancient Greeks, that out of their passions they made their gods. And this is true still of modern heathen peoples. They have constructed their gods by transferring to them that which they have felt in their own natures. Their own pride, envy, selfishness, their cruelty and grosser appetites are made to enter into the conception of their divinities.

In a somewhat similar fashion the philosophical, political, and social ideas of his age have affected

[1] Compare Stories of Wesley, Whitfield, Robertson of Brighton, etc.

the Christian's view of God. Every reader of early Church history knows how deeply theology was tinged by Greek Philosophy, by neo-Platonism, and by the politics of the Roman Imperial era. Speaking of the latter influence, Mr. Morison says: "With such visible rulers of the world before them, it is no wonder that men formed very dark and cruel notions of the invisible ruler who disposed of all things. Cruelty, injustice, arbitrary power, were too familiar to be shocking, too constant to be supposed accidental or transitory. The real world before their eyes was taken as a dim pattern and foreshadowing of the ideal world beyond the grave. God was an Almighty Emperor, a transcendental Diocletian or Constantine, doing as he list with his own. His edicts ran through all space and time, his punishments were eternal, and whatever he did his justice must not be questioned."[1]

There is a tendency to exaggeration of statement here. But there can be no question that what goes by the name of Latin Theology was largely affected by prevailing ideas of Roman government. Nor are such influences unfelt at the present time. They have been handed down to us in creeds and confessions of faith which are still regarded as the standards of the Church.

[1] *Service of Man* (Morison), p. 36.

There are, however, two higher influences which are affecting more and more the conception of God at the present time, and chasing away from it all doubt and misconception; the one is the demand for a Biblical Theology, and the other the call to get back to Christ.

The one great source of material for building up a true idea of God is the Bible. The Bible is occupied throughout with God, and yet there is in it no definition of His nature, no theory as to the constitution of His being. From the first page to the last it assumes Him. Compare any of the creeds and their attempts to map out His attributes, with the language of the Bible concerning Him. But whilst there is here no hard and fast definition of the being of God, there is what is of far more importance, a vital growth of the idea, which corresponds to a gradual expansion of the knowledge, and the longings and aspirations of the human spirit.

What a grand history of the Divine Being is that which we find in the Scriptures, from the first obscure signs of His appearance in the garden of Eden scene, to the final unclouded disclosure of the fulness of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. This glowing development of His image is marked throughout its several stages by the

rise of names which are bestowed on Him. God is "the Almighty" of the patriarchal age; the "Jehovah" of the Covenant; the "Lord of Hosts" of the monarchy; the "Holy One" of the prophets; the "gracious, merciful, long-suffering One," to those who sought refuge from their sins, and from the penalties due to the breaking of the Law.

God is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He is "without variableness and shadow of turning." But man grows in intelligence, in moral and spiritual power, and in experience, and in so doing discloses new susceptibilities for certain phases of the divine nature, or throws open more widely those channels which have before presented only a narrow and obstructed passage for the entrance of fuller revelations. In such a study we see that each revelation of God's nature was peculiarly fitted for the men to whom it was made, until we arrive at last at the finished and complete Biblical idea of God which consists in Jesus standing before us and saying, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

Whilst the objective growth in the revelation of God has reached its culmination, and we can conceive of no further development than is to be found in Him who is "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person," the sub-

jective growth is going on still. Every individual Christian ought to be reaching up towards a truer and grander conception of God. Every event, prosperous or adverse, joyous or sad, pleasant or painful; every trial and difficulty should be disclosing some new phase of His nature, should be teaching some deeper spiritual lesson. Each new generation ought to be attaining to wider visions.

The work that Christ has done in the direction of unveiling the nature of God and pressing His claims on the conscience cannot possibly be overestimated. It is through Him alone that uniformity and unity in the views of men regarding God can be obtained. Outside of Christ all is confusion, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."[1]

In this connection appear the different phases of His work.

Christ is the perfect *revealer* of God. The unique position of Jesus in this respect is brought out in the 1st chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us

[1] John i. 18.

by *his* Son." God, who in many parts or portions,[1] not "at sundry times" merely, though this idea is involved in the term, but in fragments and snatches. The idea is, that the revelation, up till the advent of Christ, was an imperfect one. It was given in sections, 'here a little,' and 'there a little,' with intervals, more or less protracted, between, in which there was no addition made to the heritage of truth.

The revelation, further, was not only in numerous parts, it was given "in divers manners."[2] The communications assumed various forms; there were commandments, promises, visions, and dreams; there was the Urim and Thummim; there were predictions and types, parables and proverbs, psalms and songs; there were exhortations, expostulations, invitations, warnings, pleadings, threatenings. The revelation also was given "in the prophets"; now it is in a Son, "even His only begotten Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things." In the Old Testament the revelation was partial, scattered, gradual. In the Son it is full, perfect, final, complete. The last word concerning God is spoken by the Son. In Him we have the absolute revelation of the mind and heart of the Eternal. He has been to the world practically a

[1] πολυμέρως. [2] πολυτρόπως.

new revelation of God ; man has seen God in Christ as man never saw God before.

Christ is the great *means of approach* to God. It does not come within the design of this book to enter into any of the theories of the atonement which have arisen from time to time. We seek merely to point to the one fact which lies in the line of our argument, that Jesus of Nazareth has been the means not only of making men understand God better, but also of opening up "a new and living way" to Him. All who profess and call themselves Christians are agreed in saying that "through Him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father."[1] He is the door, the open door which no man can shut.[2] Whether the obstacle between God and the soul existed on both sides ; or whether the only veil that interposed was that which indifference, or unbelief, or open dislike and enmity, weaves over the human heart, we will not stop to inquire. It is sufficient to show that our way to God, and His way to us, if you will, have been opened up in a marvellous fashion through the instrumentality of Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

The revelation and reconciliation brought about by Christ are of such a nature as to help, as nothing else possibly can, to the fulfilment of the

[1] Eph. ii. 18. [2] Revelation iii. 8.

command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." There is here a God disclosed to whom the whole nature goes out in loyalty and adoration. For Jesus gives us, in all its fulness and glory, the last and richest name for God, *viz.* Father.

Taking the various names that have been applied to God we find that the greater proportion of them may be classified under two heads, the Potentate idea, and the Paternal, or rather the Parental idea. God is designated Sovereign, Lord, Governor, King, Judge. The conceptions of law, power, authority, justice are dominant here. He is also represented as Father or Parent, for we meet with the thought of the motherhood as well as the fatherhood of God. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."[1] "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."[2] In the Old Testament you have the figure of the mother-eagle used by Jehovah to represent Himself; and in the New Testament that of the hen is employed by Christ to denote His yearning love for men, each image being characteristic of the spirit of the dispensation in which it is used. There are also references to the maternal side of God's nature which are not noticeable in the English version, as in the thirty-first

[1] Psalm ciii. 13. [2] Isaiah lxvi. 13.

chapter of Isaiah and the fifth verse, where the feminine gender is "used to represent the tender care, and, as it were, *maternal* love into which His leonine fierceness would be changed" (Delitzsch).[1]

It was the thought of this fulness of the divine nature which made the school of theologians of which Theodore Parker is the outstanding representative, address God as "the Father and Mother of our spirits." We need not follow their practice; at the same time it will be well to remember that in the name Father as addressed to God there is included all that makes the name of mother so rich in heart-moving associations.

The Potentate and the Parental, these are the two outstanding conceptions of God which are found in theology. In earlier times among ancient peoples, the ideas of king and father seem to have been closely united. Zeus is either King of gods and men, or Father of gods and men. The king was originally regarded as the father of his subjects. The kingdom[2] was a family. In these instances, however, the name father as applied to the gods, did not signify what was meant by the term in the New Testament, the conception involved in it

[1] "As little mother-birds hovering, so will Jehovah of hosts protect Jerusalem." (G. A. Smith *in loc.*)

[2] βασιλεία.

being more that of power, authority, majesty, dignity, than of love and care. In fact the monarchical idea of God was that which prevailed most widely in the world before Christ's day.

Turning to the Old Testament, the name Father, no doubt, occurs a number of times there. In the song of Moses the question is asked, "Is not the Lord thy Father that hath bought thee."[1] "In the book of Isaiah we read, "Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; Thy name is from everlasting."[2] But the term has neither the position nor the significance which it assumes in the language of Jesus and His apostles.

Note these points of difference:

1. In the Old Testament, Father is only the *occasional* name given to God; in the New it is the prevailing one. Compare some devotional portion of the Old Testament, such as the Psalms, with the Gospels or the Epistles. The ordinary titles under which God was designated in the Old Testament were those which refer to His power, such as king, judge, etc. And where such titles are not expressly employed, we have references to the more commanding aspects of the divine nature. In the New Testament,

[1] Deut. xxxii. 6. [2] Isaiah lxiii. 16 (Cf. Malachi i. 6; ii. 10).

on the contrary, the title Father is the outstanding designation of God. It received at Christ's hands a unique pre-eminence. It is the name into which Christ put all that He believed about God. It was the name He came specially to reveal, which it was His life's work to unfold and proclaim, which He Himself constantly employs, and which He spends His strength in teaching us to use. In the certainty, clearness, and fulness with which Jesus first apprehended and announced the Fatherhood of God, in the manner in which He made it the inspiring idea of His life, and sought to give it a central place of power over man's life, there was an "epoch making advance beyond the limits of the Old Testament religious consciousness."

2. Where the name Father is used in the Old Testament, it chiefly refers to God's relationship to the Jewish people as a whole. He is the Father of the nation. "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, my first-born."[1] "When Israel was a child I loved Him, and called my son out of Egypt."[2] In the New Testament God is represented as the Father of individual spirits. In the most glowing strain of poet or prophet you never hear anything resembling the cry which Christ puts into the mouth of the prodigal in the parable, and which He longs to hear coming

[1] Exodus iv. 22. [2] Hosea xi. 1.

from the lips of every wandering child, "I will arise and go unto my Father." I, a single, poor, despised, depraved, degraded soul, here in the far country, venture to claim my relationship to the Father.

3. Even where God is spoken of in the Old Testament as the Father of Israel, the title seems to refer to the position He occupies towards them as their Guide and Defence, as their Creator and Preserver, rather than as their Loving Parent; whereas in the New Testament, whilst these ideas are included in the name, it is the brooding care and spontaneous watchful love that are emphasized, "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."[1]

In this connection there is to be noted how little is said in the Old Testament about the spirit of adoption, and what slight traces of that spirit you discover there. There are some who declare that it is not to be found there at all; that is going too far. At the same time there is nothing in the Old Testament to put alongside such passages as the eighth

[1] "As we have been led, almost instinctively, to use in this connection the name of Father in speaking of the Christian's God, we cannot but observe, in passing, that this name, now so familiar to us, belongs essentially to what we may venture to call *the theology of Jesus*. It is used in the Old Testament, but in a sense closely allied to theocratic exclusiveness. Jesus was the first to raise it out of this limited sphere."—*The History of Christian Theology in the Apostolic Age* (Reuss), Vol. I. p. 185.

chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. We feel in reading this passage that we have come into closer touch with God.

Now, it is in full view of the parental bond, that we are to build up our conception of God and to establish our relationship to Him. "Father" is the last and all-embracing word in the self-revelation of God to men. In this we are to discover the final definition both of His nature and government. To rest content with any other name is to rob ourselves of the best that the thought of God can give us. The Potentate idea by itself is imperfect. It lacks not only the elements of tenderness and goodness, but those of universality and necessity. Kingship may not be regarded by some as anything but accidental, created for a certain purpose, and liable to be modified, or even entirely abolished, by changes in the thought and life of man. But the relationship between parent and child is founded in the depths of nature itself; it is recognized everywhere—it can never be set aside.

At the same time it is to be noted that we have in the name Father all that is contained in the Potentate idea. The true Father is also King; He exercises authority, He displays power. He executes vengeance on the disobedient and rebellious. And Jesus in His use of the name included the attributes

which had gathered round the Old Testament names for God. He is the Holy Father, the Righteous Father. He is "Father, Lord of heaven and earth." The man who takes upon his lips this great name, whilst he realizes the spontaneous, beneficent love of God, must at the same time realize His holiness and authority, and majesty and glory, which only come out more strongly in and through His Fatherly love.

It is very doubtful if this doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, which was the dominant idea of Christ, and occupied the chief place in His teaching, has obtained the same position in the creeds and theological systems of Christendom. In the past, monarchical notions have extensively prevailed. God is the transcendental Imperator, who does as He lists with His trembling subjects. It was high treason in the days in which these systems were drawn up to whisper a doubt as to the justice or propriety of any royal act. And so, whatever the Almighty Sovereign might do must not be discussed. It was according to the good pleasure of His will, and that was enough.

There has come over the mind and heart of Christendom a great change since the standards of many of the churches were framed. Arbitrary power having been taken from the earthly type, it has departed from the heavenly antitype, and in

place of a stern and self-willed Ruler we have a merciful and gracious Father. The nineteenth century, it has been said, "starts with a changed idea of God." There has been a re-discovery of the Divine Father, because there has been a re-discovery of that Divine Son, who is the express image of His person and the effulgence of His glory.

But the old standards remain as the recognized authority in matters of faith. And so you have this anomalous state of things,—the Potentate idea supreme in the creeds, the Parental in the minds of religious teachers, and in the hearts of the worshippers. The difference between the creeds and the faith is not in a few minor details, but it is that they are at variance on that which must form the basal principle of theology. And it will only be in so far as the old idea of God as a self-centred Being—existing, creating, redeeming, saving, damning for His own glory—is left behind, and replaced by the Christ-revealed Fatherhood, that the fullest opportunity will be given for entering into that blessed oneness with God which forms the culmination of Christ's heart yearnings, and which must bring with it the fulfilment of the dream of a world-wide brotherhood.

Let us sum up what has been said on this point. Standing supreme among the requirements of the great double commandment, the keeping of which is

the whole duty of man, is the demand,—Thou shalt love God with all the powers and faculties of thy being. But in order that we may love God thus He must appear gracious and attractive. It will be necessary, therefore, to banish from our minds all those false conceptions of His nature with which certain schools of theology have made us familiar. It will be needful, more especially, to discard the figure which has been left us by Latin theology of an Almighty Caesar, sitting withdrawn from the world in august state, and making it the business of His own existence and the end of His universe, to keep up His dignity. Such a God we can never learn to love at all, much less to love with all the heart and soul and mind and strength. We must learn to breathe the name, 'Father.' And we will look to Jesus, to His person, His words, His life, His character, His disposition, His conduct, His sufferings, His death, for a revelation of that wealth of love and yearning which fills the divine heart; we will watch for the breathings of the Holy Spirit, as He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, and say,—Here we find what the Divine Fatherhood means.

We will, in a word, hold by the Christlikeness of God; we will put, in the place of the representations of God which have ruled the imaginations even of men who called themselves Christian, that of the

Lord Jesus Christ. And as Dagon fell down and was shattered before the ark; as the gods of Olympus, in the vision of the poet, faded away when Jesus flung His cross down on the council table; so will all conceptions of the divine nature that have hindered the flow of our heart's affections towards Him, or prevented us from serving Him "acceptably and with godly fear," disappear in the light of Christ's countenance.

Now, were this great first commandment to appeal to us with constraining power, there would be no need to enforce the other two. To love God as Father, involves the love of men as brethren, and also the love of the higher nature in ourselves, which will then seek its goal in being perfect as the Father which is in heaven is perfect. As we have already seen, our conceptions of God and man always move together. They share the same fate. They rise and fall in an undivided and indivisible solidarity. Elevate and ennoble the conception of God, and you produce a similar effect on the conception of man. Where the consciousness of God is purest, strongest, sweetest, there the finest natures are produced, and the closest fellowship with man established.

But whilst the other requirements of the great all-embracing commandment are really contained

in the first, so that where love to the God revealed in Jesus Christ exists, there should be no necessity for inculcating any other love; yet as an actual fact the three 'loves' have not always been regarded as one. In every age of the Church's history they have been sundered in word and deed, and men have shown by their actions that they have deemed it possible to love God without loving their neighbours, or without loving their own higher selves. It is needful, therefore, to give to each requirement such attention as will help to exhibit it in its true light. We have done this with self-love, let us now do the same for the love of neighbour.

When Jesus, by His endorsement of the summary of the law, by His enunciation of the golden rule, and by the issuing of what He called, at one time "a new commandment," and at another time "My commandment," gave a fresh lease of authority, and a unique position to the command to love one another, the world of men was split up into numberless irreconcilable sections. Every species of disintegrating force had been at work to keep man apart from his fellow.

There were first of all national prejudices. Amidst numerous petty distinctions there appear three great divisions of mankind. The inscription

which announced to the world the name of the Crucified One was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. There was no vital affinity among these communities; each held itself aloof from the others on some point of fancied superiority. The Jew as a member of the elect nation, as the possessor of the covenants, as heir of the divine promises, believed that he ought not to have any dealings with uncovenanted peoples. The whole world was divided for him into 'Jews and Gentiles,' and he reserved his love for members of his own race. To the Greek again, the division was marked, 'Greeks and Barbarians'; and 'neighbour' to him meant a member of his own nation. For the Roman it was enough to be able to say *ego Romanus sum*, in order to make him feel that he stood on a different footing from either Jew or Greek. He had conquered the world, and the conqueror was, as a matter of course, superior to the vanquished, and could not be expected to treat him as his equal.

These divisions were sharply marked, and were intensely real. The Jews according to Tacitus were known for their hatred to all the world. Plato congratulated the Athenians that they had shown in their relation to Persia "a pure and heartfelt hatred of the foreign nation." Pilate

put a wealth of scorn into the question which he addressed to Christ, "Am I a Jew?" "As for any conception of duty or responsibility to others outside the community, it did not exist. Morality was of the narrowest and most egotistical kind. It never, among the Greeks, embraced any conception of humanity; no Greek, says George Henry Lewes, ever attained to the sublimity of such a point of view."[1]

Within the borders of each nation, moreover, there were endless divisions between man and man. All the factors which tend to produce separation were in full play, and were not only unchecked by the morality or religion of the time, but actually approved and encouraged by it. Race, rank, social position, wealth, talent, culture, age, sex, formed barriers which were regarded as insuperable. Paul declares that in Christ there is "neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, male nor female."[2] He indicates here some of the middle walls of partition which rose to a height that in the present age cannot be understood or even imagined.

It is true that the *idea* of humanity was not

[1] *Social Evolution* (Kidd), p. 134.
[2] Colossians iii. 11; Galatians iii. 28.

unknown to the ancient world. It arose in the mind of Socrates when he called himself a citizen of the world. It shone out more clearly in the later stoics, for Seneca, called by one of the Church fathers "often our Seneca" (*saepe noster Seneca*), speaks of having the world for our fatherland. The theatre rang with applause as the actor uttered the sentiment, "I am a man and I deem nothing human to be alien to me." But the conception was a thing in the air; it remained a lifeless theory, a pleasing dream of the philosophic few. It never had any power over the hearts, the consciences, the lives of men; it never came down as a working force to the level of the street or market place. And as to religion bringing about its realization, the thought was openly flouted. Some time after Christianity had been in the field, Celsus, who has been designated the Voltaire of the second century, writes, "He would be absolutely mad to believe that free men and slaves, Barbarians and Greeks, Romans and Scythians, could ever be united in the same religion."

There had doubtless come about, through the fusion of races, and the facilities of travel, an outward mingling of men of different nationalities and creeds. But this, instead of drawing them

sympathetically closer together, only served in many cases to widen the breach, and increase the mutual repugnance. To Juvenal the *via Sacra* is made unbearable because he cannot walk along it without being jostled by wretched Greeks and Syrians.

It was to a world thus disintegrated that Jesus began to proclaim, together with the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, that of the Brotherhood of Man. When ye pray, He cried, say 'Our Father.' Come to Him as a united family, do not leave any one out, learn to love each neighbour as yourself whoever he is, whatever his nationality, or social position, or rank, or class.

There is one feature of Christ's teaching which conduces powerfully to this end. In Him you have for the first time in all its fulness the doctrine of the value of man, simply as man. The conception of human individuality has met with varying fortunes. The struggle to assert its independent glory forms the romance of history, its victories are the pioneers of true progress. The end will be a condition of society in which each person will be valued for his own sake, and not for anything that may be regarded as accidental to him, anything that belongs to his circumstances, such as of his birth, his lot in life. This goal seems

still a considerable distance off, though it is "nearer than when we believed."

It was reserved for Jesus of Nazareth to reveal and proclaim it. He pled for the essential dignity and greatness of the human being wherever found; and the result of His teaching and His Spirit will be the ultimate, universal, and complete acceptance of this view. Christ taught that there is a quite infinite value attached by God to every man; that no matter who or what the man is, though he should have lost all status, all rank, all moral goodness even, he is thought of, yearned over, loved and sought out by the Father of Spirits. A new voice was heard in that ancient world (it is still new to many in these latter days) proclaiming that it is not as king or noble, not as powerful or rich, not as refined and cultured, not even as righteous and pure, that man is regarded by God or should be thought of by man, but that he is great in himself, great even in his fall, great as containing in himself the possibilities of better things.

This doctrine when promulgated by Jesus was looked upon with suspicion. He found no response to it in the hearts of His hearers. He had to look to heaven for sympathy with him in His joy over the "one sinner that repenteth." But now the idea of the priceless value of each separate soul

has permeated all ranks of society, and every domain of literature. It has been seized upon even by the opponents of Christianity, and made the theme of many a philosophical treatise and high sounding dissertation. "It is indeed," says Mozley "an extraordinary anomaly that a truth for which we are indebted to Scripture alone has become the very watchword of infidelity, and that the enthusiasts of unbelief, its poets, dreamers, and political agitators should have gone mad upon an idea which is historically the gift of Revelation to mankind,—the greatness of man as such." After quoting in proof of this statement from Shelley's *Queen Mab*, the writer continues, "Had the poet been asked whence he got this idea of man, this sense of the dignity of every man, of how much there was in him, and what was due to him, he could not have pointed to a single ancient philosopher as his teacher. The ancient world had no such idea; and had such a notion been suggested to one of its luminaries he would have scouted it as visionary and fantastic."[1]

Mr. Morison declares that the days of Christianity are numbered. It lags, superfluous, on the stage, forming a hindrance to movements of a higher order, of one of the principal of which he is the

[1] *Ruling Ideas in Early Ages* (Mozley), p. 232.

chief apostle. But what of the conception of his book? "The service of man," that is his theme. But where, one asks, did he get his idea of 'man,' of the essential dignity and worth of each human personality however lowly, and where did he get his gospel of the 'service' of man as such, but from that very Christianity which he affects to disparage and discard? These ideas took their rise with Christianity, and are supported to-day by Christian feeling.

And it is not merely the words of Christ that have given vividness and power to the new conception of the value of man; it is also, and mainly, His death. This has raised the standard of measurement in an infinite degree, and has led to the inclusion under it of every human soul. The very weakest member of the race is "a brother for whom Christ died." Men are looked at in the light of what He suffered for them, and of the possibility of their attaining, through His sacrifice of Himself, and His power working in the heart, to His adorable likeness.

Now would it be possible to retain this high conception, and this sustained 'enthusiasm of humanity' if the vision of Christ were withdrawn from the eyes of men? These ideas did not exist before He appeared; is it certain that they would con-

tinue if His words and example and Spirit were to cease to influence the world? Is it conceivable, more especially, that the 'service of man' would under such circumstances receive, according to the confident assertions that are made, a new impetus?

CHAPTER VI

CHRIST'S NEW COMMANDMENT

THE "New Commandment" which Jesus promulgated demands more than a mere passing allusion, for it occupies the place of central authority in the realm of human brotherhood, and is destined to play an even more important part in the future than it has done in the past. It forms the standard according to which the Royal Law is to be measured and regulated. Let us see, above all, what is the force of the term 'new,' for into it Jesus meant, we are sure, to put a world of meaning:

1. It was new in its *all-embracing scope.* By the term 'neighbour' the Jew meant a member of his own nation. Jesus showed that the Old Testament precept and His own new law included non-Israelites. But He extended the area much further than this. In truth all middle walls of partition between man and man were to be laid

low. We are to love not only the person with whom we are allied, or with whom we have some mental or moral affinity; we are to love the churlish man who does not return our salute, and even the enemy who inflicts injury upon us. The love which we bestow upon men should be of that spontaneous kind which flows copiously from the heart of God and lets its beneficent stream fall upon all without distinction. The neighbour, the other whom I am to love, is any one with whom I am brought into contact, or even into collision, who needs my services, or who can give me what I need. Let him be of my own nation, or class, or some other; of my own way of thinking, my own tastes, or the opposite; be he friend or foe, it is my duty to love and serve him, as it is his duty to love and serve me, and the duty of both to receive this love and service. "Add," says the apostle, interpreting Christ's new commandment, "Add to brotherly kindness love"; add to that affection which you bear to those with whom you have a certain affinity, love to all men everywhere and under all circumstances. The table of love, according to Christ's interpretation of His own commandment, must be spread in the presence of our foes, and every effort made to compel them to come in. "Love your enemies," is His cry, "bless

them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."

The love with which alone Christ will be satisfied is that which is strong enough to overleap all the boundaries which men have set up between themselves and their fellows, and to go up and down the moral and social scale, pervading with its searching influence all orders, and ranks, and conditions of life, from the nearest to the most remote, from the highest to the lowest.

2. The novelty of this commandment of Jesus comes out, further, in the adoption by it of a *positive* and even *aggressive* tone. The difference between the moral legislation of the Old Testament and that of Christ is very marked. In going from the one to the other we pass from the region of prohibitions and negative principles to that of positive commands, and spontaneous moral activity. The law is full of "Thou shalt not"; the new commandment reads throughout "Thou shalt." The young ruler who came to Christ bore the ripest fruit that could be produced under legal culture. But his goodness consisted merely in abstention from wrong-doing. When Christ enjoined on him the positive duty of neighbourly beneficence, he was not able to rise to its fulfilment.

Under this rule, sins of omission, and above all, those of neglect in the performance of kindly deeds, receive a hitherto unheard of prominence. The sinner under the law is the man who does evil; in the gospel he is the man who does not do good. A man under the law earned a good reputation if he was not found breaking any of the commandments; but under Christ's new law he is looked upon as a sinner unless he abounds in good works. The crimes of the follower of Jesus have no place in any statute book, for they do not consist in the doing of injury to others, but in neglecting to help them. It is only the law of Christ that takes note of these offences at all; but it is on these that Jesus mainly dwells, leaving to other agencies the judging of positive transgressions.

3. The commandment to love one another was new because of the *position* assigned to it in the Christian system. Not only is love to others made a religious obligation, it is elevated as such into the first place in the religion of Jesus. Christianity is pre-eminently the religion of love. In no other religion is love to others put in this central position. All other religions are more or less legal in their nature, requiring, chiefly, obedience to rules and regulations, or attendance to ritual observances. It was reserved for Christ to make love supreme,

and to point out that when once love is given this foremost place it will bring all other things necessary to the keeping of religious requirements in its train. Love fulfils; it makes all the old commandments superfluous because it lifts the soul on to a higher plane.

4. This commandment of Christ may well be called 'new' when we consider the *purity* and *strength* of the love that was enjoined by it. It was love in its fullest and richest conceivable form. A new word[1] had to be coined to express it. The words in ordinary use expressive of love were not pure enough, or they were not large enough or deep enough, to contain the divine thought. The new rich wine of the kingdom of God would have burst the old bottles, and new ones had to be prepared. It is love for the unlovely; it is unselfish, active, serving love, love which finds all the reasons for its existence and exercise in itself; love which never suffers itself to grow weary or impatient, or bitter, or faithless, or hopeless, which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Ἀγαπή, says the apostle, "never faileth," it is a fountain that never runs dry. And Jesus Christ in His life and death is the standard which is set up

[1] ἀγαπή.

for our imitation: "*As I have loved you* that ye also love one another." Such an ideal for the relationship between man and man was absolutely novel. There never had been anything like it in the history of the world. It confronted the gigantic selfishness of the age in which it was brought forward, and amazed it by its transcendent glory.

5. This commandment was new because, along with a perfect pattern, there was given a *sufficient power* to enable men to make it a reality. A beautiful dream before Christ appeared, men beheld it now in their midst a solid veritable fact. The word Love became flesh and dwelt amongst men full of grace and truth. "See how these Christians love one another!" the Pagan world exclaimed in astonishment, as it beheld men and women of widely differing dispositions and characteristics exhibiting towards each other a benign regard and self-forgetful affection which made their lives lovely and of good report.

Yes, and the world saw even more than this. It saw Christians obeying every day the hardest of all maxims, "Love your enemies." It saw a Stephen loving as Jesus loved, the disciple praying, like the Master, for his murderers. It saw a Paul, spending and being spent for men, though the more abundantly he loved them the

less was he loved; overcoming evil with good; heaping coals of fire upon the heads of his foes. It saw a son of thunder, who in earlier days had asked that fire might descend from heaven on those who refused to receive Christ, changed into an apostle of love, whose chief theme is Christ's new commandment.

Now if it be true that "the man who recognizes new duties above those he has been taught to observe, who sees beyond the circle of conventional obligation the dim forms of new claimants on his heart and service, is a moral inventor, an enlarger of human life,"[1] what place shall be given to Him who was not only the pioneer in this larger field; but who even yet is only followed afar off by the most advanced of His disciples?

How difficult it is to get this command to love put, in the minds of Christians, on the same lofty and solid *religious* basis as that on which it is established by Jesus. It is continually being set aside for matters of intellectual belief, or even short-sighted opinion, on some small point of faith or practice. In the interests of the proportion of the truth there is need to protest against this neglect, and to plead for its

[1] Morison.

restoration to the position assigned it by Jesus Himself.

The great question of life is to find for the soul its true environment, and to enable it to make full use of it. For life needs correspondence with environment; imperfect correspondence means imperfect life, perfect correspondence, life eternal. It was to show the soul its perfect environment, and to lead it into perfect correspondence with it that our Lord lived and taught, suffered, died, and rose again. It is for this that He has sent the Holy Ghost to witness with our spirits that we are the sons of God, to take of the things of Jesus, and show them unto us. And He has declared that we must look for this environment in the direction of both God and man.

For growth you need three things, seed, soil, and atmosphere. A plant cannot thrive and bear fruit unless it lies open to the influences of the sky, and at the same time comes into vital relations with the fatness of the earth. It is impossible to make it thrive in a dark cellar, shut out from wind and sun and rain. Nor can it be grown in the air, separated from the forces which the soil supplies. It must be able to strike its roots into the deep rich loam, and raise its head to the heavens. And you cannot bring a human soul to full fruition, or

indeed give it culture, in the true sense of the term at all, until you make it lie open to the sunshine of God's love and the continual dew of His blessing, and, at the same time, imbed it in the midst of human relationships. A service of God without a service of man; or a service of man without a service of God, is as inconceivable as the production of flower or fruit without both earthly soil and heavenly influences. And the more real and vital such double correspondence is, the richer and more highly developed will the soul become.

Our Lord has clearly shown that the three are one, the soul, God, man; and that you must keep the three in this perfect oneness in thought and action if the true conception of the 'Jesus religion,' as some one has called Christianity, is to be realized.

CHAPTER VII

CHRISTIANITY—THE ABSOLUTE RELIGION

WE are now in a position to estimate the place which 'the Christian religion' occupies in the world. Does it take its stand among other religions on an equal footing, or at the best, *primus inter pares*; or does it occupy a position that is peculiarly its own? The claim has been put forward for Christianity that it is the absolute religion, the final and perfect form of religion, that from which nothing need be taken, and to which nothing can be added, the highest manifestation of religion conceivable. It is said that we can expect nothing finer or greater; that we have only to understand it and develop it, and apply its principles to mind and heart, to conscience and life, in order to attain to the perfect well-being, the commonwealth and the commonhealth of the soul. This is a great claim to make for Christianity. Can it be adequately supported?

It is our belief that it can, if we will only keep our minds from being corrupted from the "simplicity that is in Christ Jesus." For if we regard the chief end of Christianity to be the fulfilment of this great two-fold commandment to love God and man with all the faculties and powers of our being, and with these at their highest point of intensity, in order that a character and life might result full of the sweetness and light that is in Christ Jesus, then it is at least extremely difficult to see how it is possible to arrive at a higher conception of religion.

It is certainly impossible to imagine a more inspiring idea of "the chief end of man." This is not simply to glorify God, but to glorify all with whom man is related, and to glorify man himself. One cannot think of any way in which this conception can be added to or improved upon. More perfect forms for its expression may be elaborated; more justice may be done in life and conversation to its fundamental principles; but as an ideal it is not conceivable that it can be surpassed or superseded. And if it can be shown that Christianity is the only religion that gives this two-fold commandment the supreme place, and that it is the only religion that not merely issues such a law, but furnishes men, through Christ Jesus, with the means of attaining to obedience to it, then it will be hard

to refuse to Christianity a unique position among the efforts which the soul has made to attain to a satisfying religious position.

We shall be furnished with the best opportunity of eliciting what can be said for this imposing claim, if we proceed to institute a comparison between Christianity and other religions, in the light of the great two-fold commandment.

Such a comparison will bring out the following points :

1. Christianity (as already defined) takes to do, as no other religion does, with the three spheres in which man lives and moves and has his being—God, neighbour, self. In a well-known passage in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* three reverences are spoken of—reverence for what is above us, reverence for what is around us, and reverence for what is under us. Goethe says that to each of these forms of reverence corresponds a religion: "The religion which depends on reverence for what is above us we denominate the Ethnic; it is the religion of the nations, and the first happy deliverance from a degrading fear. All heathen religions are of this sort, whatever names they may bear. The second religion, which founds itself on reverence for what is around us, we denominate the philosophical; for the philosopher stations himself in the middle, and must draw down to him

all that is higher, and up to him all that is lower, and only in this medium condition does he merit the title of wise. . . . But now we speak of the third religion, grounded on reverence for what is under us; this we name the Christian, as in the Christian religion such a temper is the most distinctly manifested; it is the last step to which mankind were fitted and destined to attain. . . ."

"To which of these three religions do you specially adhere?" inquired Wilhelm.

"To all the three," replied they; "for in their union they produce what may properly be called the true religion. Out of these three reverences springs the highest reverence—reverence for oneself—and these again unfold themselves from this; so that man attains the highest elevation of which he is capable, that of being justified in reckoning himself the best that God and nature have produced; nay, of being able to continue on this lofty eminence without being again, by self-conceit and presumption, drawn down from it into the vulgar level."[1] The whole passage is worth the most careful perusal.

We would venture, however, to make the following observations on the position here taken up. It is possible, we think, to reduce the four reverences to

[1] *Wilhelm Meister*, Goethe (Carlyle's trans.), Chapman, Vol. III., p. 72.

three, by uniting into one, reverence for what is around us and reverence for what is beneath us, and making reverence for oneself the third instead of the fourth. In this way we have the three requirements of the great two-fold commandment brought before us. Again, Christianity is not a third religion, but the absolute religion, which includes in itself all three reverences, elevating each of them to its highest point, and exhibiting a vital unity among all. Christianity stands alone in this rare combination. Ethnic religions are occupied almost exclusively with the gods. The chief question with which the worshipper deals is,—How am I to appease the gods and win their favour? Heathen priests, and heathen sacred things, heathen ritual and worship, concern themselves very little, if at all, with the relationship in which the worshippers in the temple courts stand to each other. Love and kindness and peace might reign amongst them; but there might equally be indifference and even enmity and hatred. The feelings which filled the heart of the suppliant made no difference in the feelings which the gods cherished towards him, or in the manner in which they regarded his prayers and gifts.

A heathen deity cannot be thought of as distinguishing between the sacrifices and offerings of a murderer and those of his innocent victim. A Cain

and an Abel might stand side by side at their altars, and each be made equally welcome. The instruction which Jesus gives to the worshipper is not to be discovered in any record of heathen worship, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."[1] In Christianity alone the approach to God is represented as fast closed against all who are cherishing evil thoughts towards their brethren.

Again, as Ethnic religions do not concern themselves with the attitude of the worshippers to one another; so they do not inquire too closely into the state of the heart and life of the suppliant himself. You do not find written over any heathen shrine such words as these, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."[2] Nor do we find in heathen sacred books such exhortations to personal purity as are contained in the call that resounds through the Scriptures, "Be ye holy,

[1] Matthew v. 23, 24. [2] Psalm xxiv. 3-5.

for I am holy." It is a truism with us that a religious man must be a pure man, a good man. But where has this conception come from? Not certainly from the Nature-religions, not even from the Ethnic religions. A religious man, according to the prevailing ideas of the world, on which the religion of Jesus inculcated holiness of heart and life, and to which it exhibited what was practically a new type of character, did not require to be a forgiving man, a benevolent man, a loving man; nor was he called upon to cleanse himself from the defilements of the flesh and spirit. It has been truly said of the Roman religion, "All that the worshipper has to do is to set himself right with the gods by means of external ritual, *without moral significance.* When this has been observed with the prescribed rigour there is nothing to fear."[1]

But we are called upon to go a step further. Not only was there no connection established amongst the three spheres,—God, neighbour, self, in Ethnic religions; but in not a few instances an actual divorce between them was formed and encouraged. The most degrading passions were employed in the service of religion. The gods

[1] *The Ancient World and Christianity* (Pressensé), p. 410. "The gods love purity," says Tibullus; "see that thou present thyself in a garment without spot."—*Ibid.*

themselves were iniquitous and vile. Their so-called lives are most abominable reading. Zeus, the father of the gods, is an adulterer; Aphrodite is simply lust personified. Out of their lowest passions men formed their gods. What wonder if they were worshipped amid the most debasing sensual orgies. In Babylonia and Phoenicia, instead of purity being demanded as a condition of entrance into the temples, impurity was the requirement; maidens being taught that to forfeit their virtue was an act well-pleasing to the gods. The wealth of Corinth proceeded at one time largely from the hire of prostitutes in connection with the temples, and statues of courtesans had an honoured place within the temple courts.

So low, indeed, had religion come latterly in Rome that the worshippers would not have dared to utter aloud the prayers they whispered into the ears of their gods, seeing that these petitions frequently requested their connivance in the gratification of some guilty passion, or the possession of unlawful goods. "Whenever a prince commits a crime," says Tacitus, "it may be safely predicted that he will render solemn thanks to the gods." Latterly, so far had the character of the gods sunk that it came to be regarded as an insult, by a man of any nobility, or even decency of

character, to ask him to become like the gods; and, as has been said, there must have come into the heart of every honourable Roman an irresistible longing to visit upon Jupiter and his family condign punishment.

What a contrast is presented to us when we turn to the Bible! Here we have revealed to us from the very beginning a God who is holy and undefiled. And we have a constant demand for holiness on the part of the worshipper. We have the truth proclaimed by prophet, psalmist, apostle, and made quick and powerful in the words and life of Christ, that the only man who can enter into fellowship with God is he who is endeavouring to cleanse his heart, and to order his life aright. What a wonderful thing it is that such a conception should have sprung up among this little Semitic tribe! How are we to account for the fact that, alongside one of the vilest conceptions of God (the Phoenician), there should have arisen the purest (the Hebrew)? Can this be accounted for on any other theory than that of a divine revelation?

2. Christianity claims to be the Absolute Religion, because it not only has to do with these three reverences, but because it opens up each of the spheres to which they relate to the widest extent

conceivable. We are taught in it that man has the freest access to God: and we are taught also that God has the freest access to man.[1]

The end set before itself in Christianity is also to bring every man into vital union and sympathy with the whole human race, to open the door of humanity, as of divinity and of self, to its fullest extent, so that each individual shall feel in his own person the sins and sufferings of his fellow-creatures. We have, in the attitude which the Apostle Paul assumes towards his converts, the ideal which Christianity asks every man to make real in his own experience. Each church which the apostle founded, each convert he made, became as it were, a part of his own sensitive organism. He felt in his own being whatever happened to them. "Who is weak," he cries, "and I am not weak; who is offended, and I burn not?" As a mother bears in her own person the burden of her children's needs and imperfections, so there came on this great-hearted man "the care of all the churches."

The spirit which actuated him is to take possession of all. Our love, our sympathy are as yet very defective. Our range of vision is extremely limited. It takes in relative, friend,

[1] Cf. Eph. ii. 13, ff, with Eph. iii. 14, ff.

acquaintance, the neighbour full of neighbourly deeds; but scarcely yet the stranger, or the enemy. An injury to one of our immediate connection or class is more quickly and deeply resented than a greater injury to a member of another circle. An accident which happens, or a wrong which is perpetrated at home, is felt more keenly than a similar experience abroad. But sympathy is growing in its two dimensions, extensively and intensively. And the time is coming when the heart of each individual who professes to be a follower of Christ, quickened at the great central fire of the love of God, will reach out, with emotions that are ever growing wider and deeper, until it embraces the entire human family. This at least is the ideal presented to us in Christianity. That man has not reached it, that it is only faintly approximated to in the very best, ought not to be brought as a charge against this lofty religion, but rather against the feeble and selfish nature of man which has not had the strength or the singleness of purpose to live up to such a standard.

In the presentation of this exalted ideal Christianity stands out in vivid contrast with other religions. Religion in the ancient world instead of uniting men tended more than anything else to separate them. And to-day no religion outside

Christianity shows the same broad and genial outlook on humanity.

Christianity, once more, leads man to the knowledge, possession, use, and enjoyment of his own nature. No man can fully know himself, his imperfections, his faults, his frailty, his folly, his sin, on the one hand; and his capabilities, his possibilities, on the other, except in the presence of the Son of man. And no one is as able to take complete possession of himself, or is in as good a position to use, for purposes of character building, the material that is placed at his disposal, as the man who takes Christ as his Saviour, Teacher, Model, Inspirer, Lord.

Listen to one of these great passages in which the spirit of Paul breathes out in the ear of God, its innermost longings for the men and women whom he has brought to a knowledge of the truth. "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."[1] What

[1] Ephesians iii. 16-19.

yearnings! What hopes! What aspirations! What a vision of human possibilities! What a destiny is disclosed in this great utterance! To "be filled with all the fulness of God!" To have all that is within us—mind, heart, will, conscience,—cleansed, quickened, strengthened by the Spirit of God, enriched with the riches of His glory, made to bear fairest blossom and richest fruit in the summer of His love. Can the imagination of man conceive a grander ideal, a nobler end?

One does not wonder that such a man as D'Aubigné should tell us that when the full import of this great passage flashed upon his soul for the first time, in all its rare significance, he underwent what he calls a second conversion. "He brought me forth also into a large place," cried an Old Testament discoverer of the wealth of the divine grace and glory. With profounder meaning and deeper thankfulness can the disciple of Jesus echo such words; for God, humanity, the ideal self, form the wide region into which his spirit is introduced by Christ, to find there amplest scope for the exercise of his ripest powers.

3. Christianity, further, shows its absolute character by the manner in which it insists on the interdependence, interfusion, and interpenetration of the

three spheres pointed to in the great two-fold commandment. No one of these 'loves' can be posited without the presupposition of the existence of the others. We cannot have a clear conception of the nature of any one of them, nor can we realize their full practical effects except in their united action. I cannot arrive, for example, at a clear self-consciousness, or obtain full use of my powers, except in so far as I reach out towards my neighbour and my God, and take possession of the treasures which are hid in these two spheres. Nor, conversely, can I shut myself out from either of these regions without excluding myself from both.

Christianity is arranged on the interlocking system; the three lines along which its doctrines and practices run must be wrought together. They may be separable in thought, but they are inseparable in action. We speak of religion, meaning thereby the sum of our duties towards God, and of morality or ethics, signifying the sum of our duties toward others, or towards ourselves. But Christianity knows nothing of this distinction and division.

We are asked by the opponents of Christianity to believe that the two are separable, and that the time has come to make the division sharp and

clear and deep. "The worship of deities has passed into the 'Service of Man.' Instead of Theolatry we have Anthropolatry. The divine service has become human service."[1] But divine service as taught by Jesus Christ can never lay the human service to the one side. True, the two domains have been regarded as apart by those who have professed His religion, but this has been due to an imperfect idea of Christianity. A true reading of the Christianity of Christ Himself would show that the two are one, and that the terms which should be used to define it are neither Theology and Theolatry, nor yet Anthropology and Anthropolatry; but (if we may venture to coin for the occasion a somewhat barbarous terminology) Theanthropology and Theanthropolatry, the science and service of God and man in indissoluble unity.

To show the relative importance of each of the spheres in the midst of which we are placed in the religion of Jesus, it may be pointed out that Christianity has been successively defined in terms of each one of them.

If we think of the self we are called upon to love, we are told, that "Christianity is the inward rectification of the life of man" (Lynch). "What is the

[1] *The Service of Man*, p. 265.

work of Christ?" it is asked, "but simply His realization of the *idea* for which and according to which God created man" (Rothe). "The perfect manhood of the race," it is said, "is the errand of Christianity" (Beecher). "Till we all come to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (the Apostle Paul).

Or if our gaze is fixed on God, we are reminded that "the idea of Christ is the Fatherhood of God" (Brooks). "To unite humanity to God was the vast idea of the life of Christ" (Rothe). "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever" (Shorter Catechism).

Or, if the second commandment, which is like unto the first, bulks for the time being largely in our view, we hear that "the struggle of Christ in history is to bring men up to the point of duly valuing their fellowmen. We have no debt but to love one another. There is no passion worthy of us but the passion for humanity" (Munger). "When we are convinced of the brotherhood of man before God, and that the one great law of true living is the law of self-sacrifice, or of service, the chief end of theology is accomplished. By acting up to this knowledge we know God in the only way in which He can be known" (Anon). "The whole system of education, as regards the relation of man to man, has

for its end that a man should love his neighbour as himself" (Macdonald).

We feel as we read these definitions that each of them is true, but we feel also that each is only a part of the truth; if we may so express it, only a third part of the truth, no one part being valid without the presupposition of the other two. "It takes the whole manhood imbued and inspired by God, moving right both heavenward and earthward to constitute religion." Religion "means the moving of the human soul rightly toward God, toward man, and toward duty. He who is using his whole self according to the laws of God is religious" (Beecher).

4. Christianity, finally, shows itself to be the absolute religion, in that it presents to us a Person who unites in Himself all the facts and forces of this wide, three-fold experience: One who is the living centre of His system, the energizing factor which impels His followers to carry out its precepts and principles. Christianity stands by itself in respect to the supreme place that is given in it to the personal element. And as there is no power equal to that which is exerted by this influence; and as the Person of Jesus is acknowledged on all sides to be the noblest and purest which has ever been presented to the human race, it is impossible to conceive of anything

higher than the religious system of which He is the Alpha and Omega.[1]

This does not by any means imply that we have come, in the presentation to us of His religion, to the end of all progress. There is much yet to be done in the way of finding out all that this religion signifies in making our relation to the Person of Jesus closer, more intelligent, and more enduring. When, in this age of "the re-discovery of Jesus," the truths of which He is the only Incarnation and Exponent obtain the new impulse which His re-appearance on the scene is calculated to give them, one may legitimately look, if not for a complete reconstruction of theology, yet for an advance in the comprehension of its main tenets, which will partake of the character of a new reformation.

[1] "Anything higher than what is attained in the absolute God-man cannot be conceived even in thought. In Himself He is the flower of the universe, an absolutely precious Good, the personal embodiment of God's eternal love irrevocably united with humanity. But in relation to the world, He is One after whom no Second, as well as no second stage of religion, can be necessary; for He has the power to carry through the consummation of the world begun in Him, and to preserve humanity in the possession of divine eternal life."—*System of Christian Doctrine* (Dorner), II., p. 215.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EMPHASIS IN RELIGION

WE are now furnished with a means of testing all that has gone by the name of religion outside the Christian pale, and also of detecting the errors into which that which calls itself Christianity has fallen, and the imperfections that cling to the forms it has assumed. We should also be able to perceive, in the light we have obtained, any lack of proportion which may exist in the arrangement and distribution of its salient principles, any undue emphasis which may have been placed on some views of truth, or any insufficient attention that may have been paid to others.

We have seen that in the Christian religion the chief end sought is the evolution of the "new man, created after God in righteousness and true holiness." The cry is for "fruit," fruit unto holiness. It is to produce this manhood, to grow this fruit that it

labours. All its agencies, administrations, methods, must conduce to this end, or else they are turning aside from their main functions.

We have seen that its call is, "Thou shalt love," and that this love is a three-fold cord, the several strands of which are inextricably twined in one another, so that you cannot injure one without injuring all. We have seen that it presents to us Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Revealer and Restorer of the love-creating love of God, the pattern of the new man, the indwelling energy that works out in us the glory of perfect fruitage. All the life-giving principles therefore of the Christian religion meet in the great word, Fellowship.[1] "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."[2] It is in this personal region that the emphasis lies. Its cry is—Seek what ministers to this divine-human fellowship — avoid what breaks it. The emphasis in other religions, and even in the Christian religion has often been placed elsewhere; the personal element has been forgotten, or has been made of secondary importance. Men have given to other things the first place, and, in not a few cases, have sacrificed the

[1] Κοινωνία. [2] 1 John i. 3.

essence of religion to what, by its side, must be regarded as comparatively indifferent.

Let us make some inquiry into this question of the *emphasis in religion*, in the light of what has been brought forward in these pages. We have seen where it ought to be put; let us ask now as to where it has actually been put in religious systems, including the religion of Christ.

1. Religion has from time immemorial attached special importance to particular places and things. Every religion has had its holy *places and holy objects.* In some of its forms religion has had its one central shrine. This was regarded as the earthly residence of the Deity. Besides this there have been spots made sacred by the casual visits of the gods. Thus Judaism had its holy city, its holy hill, its holy temple, its holy place, its holiest of all; whilst all over the land there were localities pointed out which had been hallowed by some revelation of the Divine presence. Mohammedanism, again, has its Mecca, its Kabbah, or black stone, called the right hand of God, its mosques and praying carpets. Buddhism has its sacred cities, its sacred rivers, its sacred trees, its sacred animals, etc. And so with other religions.

The inference is that he who would know the full power of religion must place himself within these

sacred precincts, and make use of these sacred things, for in and through these the Deity manifests himself as he does not under any other circumstances. The Hebrew desired to tread as frequently as possible the temple courts, and should those who had been accustomed to attend at the offering of the daily sacrifice be banished from Jerusalem, it seemed to them that they were being shut out altogether from the audience chamber of Jehovah. And when at last the holy city and its glorious temple were destroyed, and the people were scattered to the four winds of heaven, it appeared to the remnant of devout Jews, who still clung to the traditions of the fathers, that they were being thrust out into a world which contained no tokens of the divine glory.

No orthodox Mussulman doubts that the green turban (the sign that the pilgrimage to Mecca has been accomplished) indicates that the wearer of it has been at the very gateway of Paradise, and is on the sure path to the enjoyment of its radiant bliss. A similar feeling is experienced by many professing Christians. The pilgrim who realizes the dream of his life, and is enabled to kiss the tomb of the Saviour at Jerusalem, feels (to say the least of it) surer of salvation than he did before. The worshipper who prays within a consecrated building is taught to regard it as more certain that his petition

will be heard, than if it had been offered in an unconsecrated conventicle.

You find a similar impression lingering in the minds of many who would repudiate what they speak of as this superstitious veneration for special places, in the implicit faith they show in the virtue of the mere external act of attending church. He has been to Mecca, says the Mohammedan, therefore he is a true child of the prophet. He goes regularly to church, says the Christian, therefore he is a true disciple of Jesus.

Now there should be given a place, and one of no little importance, to this feeling of veneration for special localities and objects. It must, indeed, be granted that there have been stages in the evolution of the religious consciousness where it has been necessary to lay down, and even to emphasize for the time being, the distinction between common and holy ground. As long as the mind is not enlightened enough to look upon every place as holy, it is conducive to the development and maintenance of the religious feeling to regard some places as peculiarly sacred. There was a period in the history of the chosen people, when the existence of the temple at Jerusalem, besides forming a centre for their national life, was needed to keep alive that reverence for the true God which it was the function of the Jews

to maintain amid idolatrous surroundings. Without that great religious centre there would have been serious risk of this feeling getting weakened, if not being completely dissipated.

Nor can we forget the uses to which this veneration for sacred places has been put in the history of other nations, as well as our own. It has awed and checked, time and again, the ruthless spirit of the times. What the cities of refuge were to the ancient Hebrews, the right of 'asylum,' of 'sanctuary,' has been to many a hunted soul in a lawless age. And in the present day there are still many advantages accruing from the setting apart of special places for worship and meditation. In the stillness of the sanctuary, and amid its hallowed memories, there is a larger opportunity given for spiritual fellowship than in the crowded market-place or the noisy factory.

But while there has been an important part played by this practice of localizing religion, it ought to be clearly kept in mind, that the feeling which makes the place in which a man worships pertain to the *essence* of religion, is alien to the spirit of true Christianity. Jesus settled the dispute about holy places 1800 years ago at Jacob's well. He asserted there that no one spot on earth is in itself holier than another; but that the Holy Place is the heart of the worshipper. "Woman,

believe Me, the hour cómeth, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him."[1]

As we look into the history of our Lord and of the early Church, it would almost seem as if Jesus, knowing the tendency that exists in human nature to give special emphasis to the outward, took care to lend no countenance to this tendency in His life or teaching. Was it by accident or design that Jesus Himself is never found offering prayer in any sacred place? Where was His oratorium? The wilderness, the river where He was baptized, the mountain-top, the garden without the city wall. Moreover, in none of His exhortations to prayer are special places mentioned; and it is a notable fact that not one of the spots associated with our Lord's cross and passion can be clearly identified to-day.

To the Church of the apostolic age there were no special sacred places. In fact in those early years, owing to the circumstances of the times, it was impossible for the Christians to give a local habitation to their religion. The place where

[1] John iv. 21-23.

Christ partook along with His disciples of the first Lord's Supper was the upper flat of a dwelling-house, used at other times for ordinary household purposes, and simply hired for the occasion. The place in which the little band of Christ's followers waited for the coming of the promised Comforter was also a room of the same description, perhaps the very one that had been used when Jesus was with them. The places where the first preachers proclaimed the glad tidings of the kingdom were ordinary dwellings, with occasionally a public hall, such as the school of Tyrannus which Paul made use of at Ephesus.

What other "places of worship" do we read of? The bank of a river, as at Philippi; they "went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made"; the sea-shore, "we kneeled down on the shore and prayed." Peter received on the roof of a tan-house that vision from heaven which revolutionized his mode of thinking, and led him to entertain larger views of the grace of God. Paul and Silas turned the gloomy walls of their inner prison into a sanctuary, singing songs which their fellow-prisoners heard, and which thousands of imprisoned souls have since caught up and echoed to the praise of God. Philip found it possible to perform the rite of baptism in the

water of a desert pool; and many a celebration of the Lord's Supper took place in the simple houses of the first believers. Yet who can doubt that those early Christians had the spirit of grace and supplication poured out in their midst, and the temple of God around them.

In the age which succeeded that of the apostles, the circumstances of the Christians were still such as made it impossible for them to have fixed places for the celebration of their religious exercises. In quiet times worship was conducted in private houses, most likely in the larger rooms of well-to-do believers; and, in stormy periods, when those who bore the despised name of Christian were hunted like wild beasts, it was held in such places as the galleries of the Catacombs, with which the soil under Rome was honey-combed. But instead of this homelessness of the Church proving a hindrance, the very time when it had no outward habitation was the period when it exhibited a wonderful amount of beauty and power.

When we look back, too, on the earliest days of divine revelation we discover how independent its highest manifestations were of "temples made with hands." God revealed Himself to Abraham under the open canopy of heaven; to Hagar in the wilderness; to Jacob on a spot where he least

dreamt of finding Him. The holy ground on which Jehovah showed himself to Moses was just the place whereon he stood.

Nor, coming down to more recent times, can we forget our own covenanting forefathers, who, in the interests of what they believed to be true religion, were impelled to turn their backs upon the outward and the formal, and who found on the lonely hillside, or beside the stream of the valley, many a spot where God gave signal tokens of His gracious presence. All through it is being made abundantly clear, that we may not say with regard to the kingdom of heaven, "Lo here, or lo there," for it is within us.

It is, doubtless, right and fitting to arrange for places of worship, and to make these as worthy as possible of the uses to which they are put. At the same time a careful analysis of the matter would show us, that it is not the place that has to do with the blessed influences which gather round us in the sanctuary, but the persons whose memory hallows it, and the Spirit in which we gather together. Any spot, however rude and bare, may become a Bethel to the soul that is prepared to meet with God; whilst the costliest temple, consecrated by the highest rites of the Church, and served by priests who seek to trace their lineage to the

apostles, may, because attended by the worldly and undevout, prove to be common ground. Or these positions may be reversed; the splendid cathedral may glow with the sacred fire, whilst the rude tabernacle shows only the more glaringly the dead formalism of worshippers, whose souls are as chill and bare as itself. It were foolish either to affect to despise the imposing and ornate minster, or to glorify the humble Bethel.

It is a question of emphasis; it is a search after the essential in the religion of Jesus that engages us. And here we have to do with the living, the personal, the spiritual, and not with dead and material elements. "Where is the holiest place on earth? Where souls breathe the holiest vows, and execute the most heroic purposes." "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" "There is but one temple in the world, and that is the body of man. Nothing is holier than this high form. Bending before man is a reverence done to this Revelation in the flesh. We touch heaven when we lay our hand on a human body."[1]

It is then personal and spiritual thought and feeling which lend a sanctifying influence and a peculiar glory to the place of worship. It is the

[1] Novalis.

consciousness of God's favour; it is the communion of the saints; it is the prayers and praises of the worshipping assembly. And this power and glory are in proportion to the manner in which we are actuated by the Spirit of the Master, as He seeks to inculcate on us the keeping of that three-in-one commandment on which "hang all the law and the prophets."

Wherever, therefore, the place is made of more consequence than the personality of the worshippers; wherever the spiritual is sacrificed to the material, love and fellowship to stone and lime; wherever men deny to their fellow-believers the name Christian, or will not admit their right to equal Christian privileges because they do not worship in the buildings which they frequent, and which have been, as they say, "consecrated" to the service of God, the non-essential is exalted above the essential. The old exclusive spirit which belongs to the earliest and crudest stages of religious development, and which Christ declared at the well in Samaria to have been left behind, is revived again, to the serious hindrance and harm of real Christianity.

2. Religion has attached peculiar importance to *times and seasons.* When men have once said,—There are special places for the performance of religious acts, it is quite natural for them to go on

to say,—And there are particular occasions on which they should be attended to.

To confine ourselves to Christianity, there is a numerous class whose language takes some such form as this: "Everything at its proper time. Religion is for Sunday; this is the day that must be set apart for it. Week days are for the sober business, the real practical affairs of life; and it is quite enough if we give up the Sunday to our religious duties."

The result of this separation of religion from the work and thought of common life is, that the man who keeps the Sunday with strictness comes to regard himself as a religious man, however full the other days of the week may be of worldliness and selfishness and all uncharitableness.

But this special emphasis placed on times and seasons is as alien to the true spirit of Christianity as the peculiar importance attached to places and things. As we may not say, "Lo here, or lo there," so we may not say, "Lo now, or lo then," for the kingdom of heaven appropriates each moment to itself as well as each spot. The whole seven days are for religion, not the seventh alone; the Sunday is, as it were, the haven into which the voyager on life's ocean runs his barque that he may repair the wear and tear of the week, that he may have quiet and leisure to consult his chart, adjust his compass,

and listen to his sailing directions. But as the sailor has as much to do with navigation when he faces wave and wind outside, as when he is repairing damages, or regulating his instruments within the quiet harbour; so the Christian has as much to do with religion when on Monday morning he plunges into the storm and stress of his tempted daily life, as when he is spending his Sunday in religious exercises. The value of the Sunday consists in the help it affords to make a man's religion become an unfailing source of elevation, strength, purification, and comfort, through all his days.

It is a significant fact that our Lord lays down no rule as to what is called "the observance of the Sabbath." When He makes reference to the day it is in the words "The Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath." The Sabbath is made for man! The necessity for a day of rest is based on human nature itself. It is not that '*religion*' demands a day specially for itself; but it is that *man*, in his physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual being, requires rest on one day in seven. Rest, indeed, not religion, is the idea connected with the Sabbath from the beginning. This is the meaning of the word itself. In the Fourth Commandment there is nothing about worship either public or private, and the keeping holy the Sabbath day con-

sisted originally in mere cessation of work. When the people were rebuked for breaking this commandment it was not because they kept away from public worship, but because they did their ordinary work on the Lord's Sabbath. To associate this day so exclusively with religion is a later idea.

At the same time the Sabbath is rightly taken advantage of for the promotion of religion. In the toil and hurry of our working days we are apt to lose sight of God, and of the duties and responsibilities which He imposes on us in respect to ourselves and our neighbours. And it is a necessity, which the entire man feels laid upon him, to get his nature brought up afresh to the ideal pitch. Religion is not a thing of times and seasons, but of personal service. But times and seasons are of inestimable value, in that they help us to learn more thoroughly, and so to fulfil more heartily and uninterruptedly in all the relationships of our daily life, the great commandment which Jesus has elevated to the supreme place in man's thought and life. The Sabbath serves this end nobly when properly used, and this should cause us to prize it as one of God's best gifts to men, and to employ it faithfully for the refreshment and quickening of the whole man.

3. It has been a common practice to give special importance to particular *persons*. Every religious

system has had these three :—Holy places, holy times and seasons, holy persons. Most of them have taught that the favour of the gods could only be secured (or at least could be most effectually obtained) at some particular spot, at some particular time, and through some particular class or individual. History furnishes abundant evidence of the strong hold that the last of these ideas has taken of the minds of men, and shows also the use that has been made of it. It gave at one time almost unlimited power to the Roman hierarchy. It made the temporal authority bow to the spiritual. If even the most powerful ruler in the land should come to believe that it is only through his father in God that he can obtain the blessing of the Almighty, or the favour of his people, he will make himself a humble suppliant at the Church's door, and wait, if need be, barefoot in the snow for days, pleading for the needed boon.

And here, again, one can see the use of this belief in rude ages. Before the spirit was enlightened enough or strong enough to believe in the privilege of personal approach to the Eternal, there was doubtless a certain amount of help given by a specially consecrated priesthood. Till the great High Priest appeared, the priests who entered the Holiest brought certain blessings to men. But, to

the spirit that is in vital touch with Jesus Christ the sacerdotal idea ought to be an anachronism, its practice little less than an impertinencc. Sacerdotalism, however, continues to exercise its sway over millions of Christians. It is hard to kill. It is fed from two ineradicable tendencies of human nature,—on the one hand, the greed of power, and, on the other hand, the yearning for an easy way of accomplishing a difficult task. We cannot hope to destroy it by direct attack. This plan has been frequently tried, and has as often failed. It can only be met by showing men the dignity of the position of the individual believer in Christianity. Real Christianity knows no special sacrificial or sacerdotal tribe or class standing between God and man, by whose mediation alone God can be approached, and man receive forgiveness of sin and assurance of salvation. It declares that every believer is himself a priest unto God. It shows that many of its principal revelations were made not to the members of any hierarchy, but to what we would call the laity. It brings each man into the immediate presence of God, and says,—Thou shalt love and serve this God for thyself, knowing only the one Mediator, whose great mission in life was, not to stand between thee and the Father, but rather to open wide the path for thine own believing feet to His presence.

It is by the promulgation of this doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers, that sacerdotalism can be met and conquered. When each man hears for himself the direct call of the great two-fold commandment, and becomes full of the sense of the sacredness of his own individual life, the assumption of supreme clerical sacredness will cease to exist.

4. Religion, again, and above all the Christian religion, has been indissolubly associated by some with a certain *form of church government.* It is only the association, it is affirmed, that has this or that constitution, or mode of ecclesiastical administration, that can be called a Christian Church at all, or that can be a channel of saving power. All other communities and believers are regarded as guilty of mortal sin in not adopting the necessary governmental form. Men in such communities must repent, they must conform, or they cannot be saved.

Now if we elect to remain under the supreme guidance and authority of Christ, we shall get no light whatever on this question of church government, which to many conscientious men seems to be so vital. Jesus never even touches upon it. He does not create a single office, or appoint a solitary official. Moreover, if our definition of religion as He taught it is correct, it is impossible to regard

any form of church government as of the essence of the Christian faith. The form may not be a matter of indifference. It may be possible to hold that there are some forms which are superior to others, or, indeed, that one particular form is the best of all. At the same time, as human love can flourish under all forms of civil government, and even under no form at all; so charity, which is the Queen of the graces, and the essential element in the gospel scheme, may disclose its divine beauty and power under any form of church government, and even outside church government altogether. And wherever men, in their strict adhesion to such forms, break the Royal Law, by ignoring or despising their Christian brethren, they are simply putting *themselves* outside the region of the essential verities of the kingdom of heaven, the greatest of which is love, whilst not affecting one single whit the status of others.

5. Great emphasis has been laid on *rites and ceremonies*. In Paul's day men said, "Except ye be circumcised, ye cannot be saved." A little later in the history of the Church it was said, "Except ye be baptized ye cannot be saved." This latter belief lingers on still, and there has been added to it in some quarters faith in the saving efficacy of other sacraments.

Now this is not the time to speak of the legitimate use of rites and ceremonies. That point will be touched on afterwards. Our object at present is simply to look into the question in the interests of the proportion of the truth in the Christian religion. In this connection if we still continue to fix on spirituality, leading to fellowship and Christlikeness, as the touchstone by which to try a man's Christianity, then it will be seen that ritual has less to do with its essence than many affirm. For, whilst one man may believe implicitly in the efficacy of outward rites, and practise them assiduously, and yet not have a grain of real Christianity, another man may eschew them and still be profoundly spiritual and Christlike.

Facts will even carry us further than this, and force us to admit that rites and ceremonies not only do not always enter into the essence of the Christian faith, but may at times threaten to become a positive hindrance to its purity and power. They do so when they come to be regarded as of its essence. In such circumstances they will require to be treated as even less than indifferent, as when Paul says to the Corinthians, among whom the ordinance of baptism had begun to occupy a place out of all proportion to its legitimate claim, "I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and

Gaius ; . . . for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." [1]

When, indeed, churches insist on external rites as essential, or disturb the proportion of the truth by elevating any of the subordinate means of grace into the position of the one outstanding qualification,—Faith that worketh by love, it becomes necessary to utter the strongest protest. When the rite of circumcision came between the members of the Galatian church and Christ the apostle cried out, "I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." And should there be circumstances in which baptism or the Lord's Supper, or any other 'sacrament,' gets to occupy a similar place, so that men trust in it for their salvation, although they do not show a particle of living confidence in Jesus Christ, similar language with regard to these rites would be quite in keeping with the spirit of the gospel.

Our Lord left two ordinances only as a legacy to His disciples ; but certain sections of the Church have added to this simple ritual ; and not only so, but have elevated such additions into an important and even into a vital position. What endless controversy there has been over ecclesiastical usages and arrangements! What an amount of keen

[1] 1 Corinthians i. 14-17.

research and careful investigation, and even of what has all the appearance of religious zeal, have been expended on the details of ecclesiastical custom and even of ecclesiastical dress, down even to the smallest minutiae of the 'priests'' movements and attire!

Is the prominence that is given to these things justified by a reference to Christ and His apostles? None of the men who founded Christianity has a single word to say on any of these observances or practices. And it is not that there is an oversight here, or that the intention was to leave these matters to the future wisdom and legislation of the Church. It is, that the whole spirit and tone of the New Testament goes in another direction. The ritual it commands consists not in the smoke of incense, and the processions of priests; not in the lighting of candles; not in clerical robes and ecclesiastical furniture; not in festivals and elevations of the host, which are all of pagan origin; but in pure and loving hearts.[1] Morality, as we saw, "is the ritual of the

[1] "Heathen rites were adopted," says Draper, "a pompous and splendid ritual, gorgeous robes, mitres, tiaras, wax-tapers, processional services, lustrations, gold and silver vases, were introduced. The Roman lituus, the chief ensign of the augurs, became the crozier. . . ." Quoting from Bishop Newton's work, Draper adds, "In short, almost the whole of paganism is converted and applied to popery; the one is

Christian Religion." "Pure ritual and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the widow and fatherless in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Would the Church clothe herself in appropriate vesture, put on her beautiful garments? Let her obey such commands as these,—Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. Put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. The New Testament only recognizes as essential, a ritual which has a direct relation to the well-being of man. Who would hesitate to pronounce on the relative merits of the two kinds of ritual, or dream of asking which of them conveys to the mind the truest idea of the religion of Jesus Christ?

manifestly formed upon the same plan and principles as the other; so that there is not only a conformity but even a uniformity in the worship of ancient and modern, of heathen and Christian Rome."—*Conflict between Religion and Science*, pp. 48, 51.

CHAPTER IX

THE EMPHASIS IN RELIGION—Continued

It has been customary to find the essence of Christianity in *creeds* and *confessions of faith.* There are many people who cannot dissociate religion from certain doctrinal statements, nor even from a particular interpretation of these statements. Christianity is to them the dogmatic system of the Church to which they belong. This is the only Christianity they are prepared to recognize. So closely is this theological structure identified in their minds with the Christian religion that, when it is attacked, the conclusion arrived at is that the true faith itself is in danger. This attitude of mind has often been regarded by the opponents of Christianity as the normal one of all believers. And so when any one of the tenets of this or that theological scheme is found, in the advancing knowledge of the times, to be untenable, the cry is raised, Where is now your Christianity?

Let us examine this point somewhat minutely, for the position of creeds and confessions in the Christianity of to-day is one that demands special attention. In what we have to say on the matter, we would wish it to be understood that we are not dealing with the general question of the formation of definite and even systematic conceptions of Christian truth. It is taken for granted by us that unless theology is to remain in a flabby chaotic condition in a man's mind, the formation of a doctrinal system becomes an intellectual and spiritual necessity. Religion without some such treatment is apt to become a sickly sentimentalism, a sort of spurious humanitarianism. But this point is not before us. The question we have to consider is not the *use* but the *abuse* of credal forms; not the formularization in a man's own mind by independent thought, of the verities of his religion; but the undue emphasis that has been placed on systems which have been formulated by others; especially where these tenets have hardened into dogmas, which have been made final, and bound for generations on the faith of the Church. Is it in accordance with the mind of Christ, or with the genius of Christianity, that the Christians of one age should run the doctrines of their religion into fixed moulds which should dominate the thought

and action of their successors; or that these should come to bulk so largely in the minds of believers as to form barriers to Christian fellowship with those who, though following the same Saviour and Lord, cannot accept all their tenets? That is the question before us. Out of it another may arise, as to whether the time has not arrived for the Christian Church to reconsider its entire position towards the dogmatic statements of the past.

There are several points of view from which one may regard creeds and confessions of faith. There is, first of all, the historical one. They are landmarks; they are records of the state of the religious thought of the time. They may be looked upon by some as defences—great dykes, as it were, built in perilous times, to keep out the raging waters of unbelief and corruption. Then there is the viewpoint of religious sentiment. They have struck their roots deep into the hearts of pious men and women. Around them have gathered many sacred memories. They form part of a hallowed past. They are an integral portion of their mental and spiritual environment. Then there is the scientific view point. Here the only questions that are asked are such as these—Does this system of doctrine accord with the subject-matter which it professes to review? Is it up to date? Is it abreast of the present state of our

knowledge of the theme? Does it submit itself pliantly, willingly, to the facts which emerge, to the better appliances which are brought to bear upon it?

The attitude of men towards creeds will differ according to the stand-point they assume. Regard them as historical records, and we will think of them with interest, and treat them with honour; if they have entered into our religious life, we will view them with affection, and speak of them with tenderness, perhaps resent hotly any attempt to revise, alter, or modify, or even to criticise them; if we approach them in a purely scientific spirit, we cannot do other than subject them to the sharpest weapons of criticism and analysis, which the best modern aids enable us to use. If we would treat them in a manner that might be regarded as beyond reproach, our attitude would perhaps require to be a kind of commingling of all these three. "But who is sufficient for these things?"

We have been trying to keep within sight of Christ leading towards fellowship amongst all those who love Him in sincerity. How does it fare with the question of dogma in this region where alone one may hope to reach "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" for all believers?

We must refer it, as all others, in the first instance, to Christ Himself. Now there can be no

dispute as to the fact that dogma does not occupy the position in His teaching that it has done in the Church. In the latter it is prominent throughout, in many cases it dominates everything; in the former, it is, to say the least, very subordinate. It has been frequently declared, indeed, that it has no place in our Lord's teaching at all. "The kingdom of God which He announced is the reign of living principles in the soul, not the adoption with the lips, or even by the judgment of a system of dogmas however true, or any set of rites however significant." [1]

It may be said in reply that it was not Christ's purpose to create or elaborate a dogmatic scheme. It was His to provide the materials for such, leaving it to His Church to work these up afterwards into shape, and to impress them on believers both as a standard and a limit for their thinking. To this one might answer, that it is never safe to say what Christ meant the Church to believe or do, outside of His own teaching and example, above all where it is a matter so crucial as this that is involved, in which His very authority as Personal Head of the Church is in danger of being relegated to an impersonal dogmatism.

But, further, in thinking of Christ, we are not only

[1] *The Christ of History* (Young), p. 66.

struck with the absence of dogmatism, but with the pervading presence of a spirit which is in direct opposition to it, the free air of individuality, the sense that each one of us has a living Saviour to deal with, and not a dead traditionalism. The religion of Jesus is intensely personal throughout. It throbs with the flow of His own heart's blood. "Come to *Me*," was His cry. "*I* am the Truth." "Learn of *Me*." "Ye search the Scriptures," was His complaint to the dogmatists of His day, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me, and ye will not come to *Me* that ye might have life." The ends He aimed at were personal, moral; the rousing of individual enthusiasm, the creation and upbuilding of character, not mental adhesion to intellectual propositions, prepared by men of like passions with ourselves, and ever after declared authoritative over faith and reason. His theology was a real thing. The light of it was His life. Was it not this clinging to dogmatic forms which He deprecated when He said, "No man putteth new wine into old bottles"; "No man seweth a new piece on an old garment"? He would have men eat grapes fresh from the living vine; He believed in each new generation making its own wine, and its own bottles as well.

Read dogmatic systems, again, in the light of the

lives of professing Christians, in order to test their right place in the Christianity of Christ. How is it possible to believe that such exclusive importance should be attached to these systems, when the fact is continually being revealed that a man may profess all their articles, and yet not be a religious man at all; whilst, on the other hand, a man may possess the scantiest dogmatic knowledge, and yet, because he has committed himself in loving faith to the keeping and guidance of Christ, may be a burning and shining spiritual light? "Rituals, Liturgies, Creeds, Hierarchies, all this were it dead as Odinism or Fetishism does not kill religion at all!"[1] One might even go further and say, that there might actually be a new impetus given to true religion were these all swept away, and the feet made to stand on the bare living rock of Holy Scripture, or better still, the heart made to lean more closely on the bosom of Christ. It has been often illustrated "that for the Christian spirit there is no secret of rejuvenescence like a bath in the original sources."

Dogmatic systems, once more, have never answered the purpose for which they were intended. They were meant to constitute an end of controversy; history proves that in this respect they have been

[1] *Past and Present* (Carlyle), p. 196.

a conspicuous failure. Prepared for the purpose of uniting believers, they have proved a fruitful source of schism. There has been division of opinion and wrangling in formulating them, division in interpreting them, division in enforcing them, division in discussing the need of revising them, division in the actual work of revising them, division in showing how far they are binding on Christian teachers, and so the fiery circle forms itself anew in each generation. "Every year, nay, every moon," says Hilary, the Bishop of Poitiers, in a well-known passage, written about the time of the Nicene Council, "we make new creeds to describe invisible mysteries; we repent of what we have done; we defend those who repent; we anathematize those whom we defend; we condemn either the doctrines of others in ourselves, or our own in those of others; and reciprocally tearing each other to pieces, we have been the cause of each other's ruin." Thirteen hundred years later we read: "This presumptuous imposing of the senses of man upon the words of God, of the special senses of man upon the general words of God, and laying them upon men's consciences together under the equal penalty of death and damnation, this vain conceit that we can speak of the things of God better than in the words of God, this deifying our own interpretations and tyrannous

enforcing them upon others; this restraining of the word of God from the latitude and generality, and the understandings of men from that liberty wherein Christ and His apostles left them, is and hath been *the only foundation of all the schisms* of the Church, and that which makes them immortal."[1] Whilst one of the latest deliverances on the same subject is, "Dissension is unavoidable as soon as we begin to lay down dogmas" (Rothe).

Again, the brightest, purest, most progressive times in the history of Christianity have not been those in which the Church has been formulating her creeds, or when she was most closely bound by them, but those in which she has either not yet come under their sway (the Apostolic age), or those in which she has struggled out from under them, and come once more into direct touch with the undogmatic teaching of Jesus (Reformation periods).

But let us consider this question of the emphasis that is bestowed on these ancient affirmations of the Church in the light of the present position of Bible students. We have in many ways departed from the standpoint of the compilers of the creeds. We are living in a different world. We have shred off a number of imperfect ideas of men

[1] W. Chillingworth, quoted in Green's *Short History of the English People*, p. 600.

and things. We look out with clearer eyes upon a widened universe. Our knowledge of the past has been indefinitely increased. Science has given us a new universe; criticism, what practically amounts to a new Bible. There have arisen in recent years the sciences of Comparative theology, of Biblical theology, and Biblical criticism. Of these sciences our forefathers were almost entirely ignorant. But they have put theology on a different basis. They have purged it of elements which were alien to its true nature. We are possessed also of superior instruments to work with on Biblical material than the framers of the creeds possessed. A more accurate philology has put us into fresh relation to the original languages of the Scriptures, and Biblical literature and history have been re-read in a brighter light.

Again, theology has become largely Christo-centric. As we have already seen, more than in any age since the apostolic, Jesus of Nazareth has become, in reality as well as in name, Head over all things to the Church. But He does not occupy this position in these dogmatic formulas. The God of the creeds does not always appear before us as a Christlike being. You cannot write over the conception of the Deity that you find there—"the Only begotten hath revealed Him."

But what is most of all to be considered in thinking of our relation to these old compendiums of theology is this, that there has arisen, since they were prepared and made binding on the great Protestant Churches, an entirely new method of approaching and of dealing with facts and forces, viz., the inductive method. Let us,—cries the new spirit as it approaches other subjects,—cease to bow slavishly to tradition, give up beginning with theories and foregone conclusions, and endeavour to come face to face with our subject, that we may receive with unbiased minds a first-hand and not a second-hand impression of it. This principle has been fearlessly applied in all departments of human knowledge, in the investigation of Nature, in anthropology, in philosophy, etc. There is only one exception. Theology, the Queen of the sciences, has not yet fully owned its sway. And it does seem a strange anomaly that, whilst absolute liberty of investigation and observation should have been granted everywhere else, it should be denied here. When all the other sciences are asking what are the facts, before venturing to form a theory, and lie open to every ray of light from whatever quarter it may come, why is it that the science, which professes to be the first-born of the Truth, should still insist on its votaries keeping by the old and effete deductive

method of first forming your theory, and then looking through it at your facts and principles?

Is it because the new method has shown itself to be a false one, or has proved a failure in the other sciences, that the old method is retained? On the contrary, it has given them all new life; it has brought them all nearer the truth; it has dispelled many errors and delusions. The wonder now is how any other method could ever have been in vogue, so fruitful has it been in every department of knowledge.

Consider how the other sciences would have fared if they had been placed till now under the conditions which are still being imposed on theology. What would be thought to-day of a body of learned men speaking after this fashion to an ardent youth who was desirous of becoming, let us say, an astronomer. Here is a stellar chart which was prepared two hundred and fifty years ago. From start to finish of your career you must think nothing, and say nothing that is not in accordance with this document. You must, at the very beginning, agree to call all these old observations and results your own. And should you, in the course of your studies, afterwards find anything different from what is here laid down, and give utterance to those new views, we shall be forced to deal with you with the utmost rigour; and

if you do not retract, or proceed to square your opinions with these ancient formulae, we will be under the painful necessity of excluding you from our fellowship.

Would a man, under such circumstances, which are scarcely conceivable in a sane science, not be led to exclaim,—Who are these men whose statements are thus regarded as infallible and final? Had they a means of access to nature which we do not possess? Were they superior to ourselves in power of observation and insight? Did they receive special and heavenly aid? Did they possess more perfect instruments than we? Has there been no growth in knowledge, in skill, since their days? And when the answer to these questions was found to be,—We are in a *better position* than our fathers for arriving at a knowledge of the stars; our method of observing them is a truer one, our instruments are far superior to theirs, our information consequently of their nature and movements is clearer and fuller, one can imagine the amazement with which the young aspirant to astronomical knowledge would exclaim,—Then, in the name of all that is reasonable, why bind me hand and foot to this imperfect past?

Is it not manifest to the simplest intelligence that to impose such limits on this science would be,

in the highest degree, foolish and disastrous. If persisted in, such action would be found to produce one of two results; it would either arrest all progress, or else it would cause the most intelligent and hopeful members of the guild to set the old formulae secretly or openly at defiance. And should the eager seeker after knowledge still remain a member of the society, it would cause him to break the pledge he took, or else to debauch his conscience by concealing his real convictions. It is only the peculiar kind of blindness, which is the result of custom, that prevents us from seeing that it is equally absurd and harmful to impose restraints of this kind on the student in the noblest of all the sciences.

Now the question is,—Is there any valid plea that can be urged to show that this state of things should continue? Why should a frank bold policy with regard to the whole matter not be inaugurated? Why should it not be demanded that when all the other sciences have adopted the inductive method, pure and simple, and are concerned only about the facts as they stand, and are anxious only to know the truth, and have absolute freedom to investigate and report, to revise, amend, and even reverse the results of the labours of the past in the larger knowledge of the present, the dead

hand of councils and confessions and creeds must no longer rest on the theologian? Has the time, 'the set time,' not come when, as it has been put (we quote the words as symptomatic of how the yearning for freedom is manifesting itself in creed-bound churches), "every branch of the Christian Church will exact no other pledge of her teachers than a declaration of faith in Jesus as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, and a promise to keep His commandments, and otherwise grant to them the fullest freedom of thought and exposition"?[1]

There are many to whom such an emancipation of theology seems altogether out of the question. What! they cry, allow every one to use his own faculties and powers as he pleases, and formulate his own views in this region where so much is at stake! It is all very well to plead for such liberty in the case of the ordinary sciences. Here it does not matter very much what view a man holds. But false religious teaching might lead to the everlasting ruin of human souls. Such anxiety as this is natural, and is not to be lightly or contemptuously treated. There are many truly pious individuals who entertain a kind of heart-horror of the very idea of granting theological liberty. No,

[1] *The Cure of Souls* (J. Watson), p. 123.

no, they cry, we must place restraints on the investigator in this region, or else we shall run the Church into the midst of fearful dangers.

But whilst a feeling like this is not to be despised, it may surely be reasoned with. What all Christians wish to arrive at is "the truth as it is in Jesus." Now, does not the history of every other form of truth prove to demonstration that the way to ensure immunity from error is to grant complete freedom of research, and thought, and speech? Take the other sciences. Each of them has had its creed-bound era, when it sought to 'square' its present knowledge with the traditions of the past. Has truth suffered since (sometimes with a great price) they obtained their freedom? Or to come nearer the question before us. At one time the Church imposed her traditional views on every department of thought and inquiry. Astronomy, geology, geography, medicine, moral philosophy, and so forth all had to own her sway. It was once a theological sin to believe that the earth revolved on its axis, or went round the sun. When Galileo was suspected of holding these views he was ordered, under the direst pains and penalties, to abjure, curse, and detest all such heresies. It used to be a damning error to believe in the Antipodes, the person who did so was in danger of hell-fire. Within com-

paratively late years a person was regarded as past redemption who refused to believe that the world was made from start to finish in six days of twenty-four hours each, or that man had existed on the earth for more than six thousand years. Some of us can remember the holy horror with which the doctrine of evolution was first greeted, and how hotly the terms sceptic, unbeliever, atheist, were hurled at its originators or defenders. It was once regarded as a most dangerous thing to allow science to make its own independent researches, and to chronicle its findings free from the bond of ecclesiastical beliefs. Our only safety lay in the Church placing a firm restraint on such movements.

One by one the other sciences have escaped from theological control. Shall any one venture to say that the results have been disastrous? Have errors increased, has progress been retarded, have men's souls been involved in deadly peril since this deliverance has been effected? Have the heavens fallen, as was predicted, since the science that Galileo loved, and whose true voice he was not permitted to use, has been relieved from dogmatic tests? Were men found contradicting God's natural laws, as was confidently affirmed, and walking like flies on a ceiling, when the existence of the Antipodes could no longer be denied? Was the Bible

thrown aside, as tearful defenders of the faith foretold, when the period of man's first appearance on the earth was pushed far backward, or when the doctrine of evolution in one form or another had to be recognized?

The sciences have all taken great steps onward as soon as they became completely relieved both from their own, and from theological traditionalism. Theology alone continues to swear by the outgrown and outworn past. It does not need a prophet nor the son of a prophet to predict, that should the Church at last set her own children free, or, which is perhaps more likely, should she be forced after some more or less violent fashion, to relinquish her dogmatic grasp, an impetus would be given to theology similar to that which has made the other sciences advance by leaps and bounds.

Theology has, at times, fallen to a position almost of degradation. Every other science has, as a rule, only the truth to consider; theology has had to consider other things, not the least of which is her own vested interests, which independent investigation might place in jeopardy. Is it any wonder if theology and theologians should be on such occasions looked upon by a cynical world with just a shade of contempt; or that it should be said that theology will never get full or fair treatment

till it is put into the hands of disinterested persons, till perhaps it is taken up by non-theological science?

Another consideration that should weigh with us in reflecting on the attitude we should assume towards creeds and confessions is, that they are no longer adequate to the exigencies of modern theological warfare. The enemy of to-day will not deploy before these old defences. And if we will continue to entrench ourselves behind them, we will not only fail to meet his attacks, but we will find that he is making serious inroads on positions which are left undefended.

We regard with pride the old moated castles of our land defence, and the wooden walls with which our forefathers guarded our sea-girt isle. We admire and honour the brave men who fought behind them. But we would not care to employ these to-day to meet the assaults of the modern foe. Men have gained an experience and skill through the labours of generations of toilers in the mechanical arts, which their fathers did not possess; and the individual would be regarded as a fool who said,—Let us keep by the models and methods of warfare which have done such effective service in the past; it is not safe to depart from the old lines.

And has the mind of man stood still in the

science of theological warfare since the seventeenth century? Every effort has been put forth to make it do so; but it has advanced of late years with wonderful rapidity. Is it not as foolish then for us to refuse to employ any other theological modes of defence than the old ones, as it would be for, say, the modern shipbuilder to bind himself by the past. He does not make the fathers of the industry in the seventeenth century his guides. He studies their lives with interest, he is full of wonder at the results they obtained, with the slight knowledge and the crude instruments they had to work with. But he says, as he reads their dissertations, they were mere babes compared with the men who are carrying on this work now. He asks not for the earlier treatises, but for the most modern authoritative work on his subject. And is there any other course open for the theologian who would walk worthy of his vocation?

In brief, the whole situation is altered since the standards of the churches were set up. The evidence on which these traditional conceptions is based has either changed, or must be estimated by other canons of judgment. If we are to continue to accept these creeds we shall either require to read into them our own meaning, or else shut our eyes to the best knowledge of our times.

The fears that are entertained when any advance from the old positions is suggested are not, as those who express them would have us believe, a sign of faith but rather of unbelief. It is not "the word of God that liveth and abideth for ever," and from which, as from God's other great book of Nature, new light is to break forth in every age, that is their guide; nor is it the living God Himself, as revealed in the person of His Son, who has promised to inspire each generation with fresh illumination and inspiration, that is their Lord; it is a word whose significance has been exhausted by their fathers in their religious formulae, and from which the men of to-day need look for no further light and leading; and it is a God who has shed so much of His light on the past that He has none left for the present. It is what (to employ a phrase used in another connection) may be spoken of as a state of *imperfect atheism*. "*Complete belief* is attained when God is realized as much in the present as in the past. *Complete unbelief* when God is excluded from the past as much as from the present. We do not negative as yet the sanctities of old; we only deny the inspiration of to-day." We are like the children of Israel at the foot of the mount, crying,—Speak thou, speak any man, but let not God speak to us lest we die.

There is in this adherence to these ancient documents not only imperfect belief in God, but too great faith in man. We smile when we hear of the custom of ancestor worship among the Chinese. But is there not something akin to this in the deference that is paid to the compilers of the creeds. Now, we would be the last to grudge these men the honour that is their due; but let us honour them not by slavishly accepting their views, but by hailing them as our brethren in that noblest of all tasks which can be assigned to man—the independent search after the truth of God.

These fears reveal also a deep-rooted distrust of our fellow-Christians. We cannot trust them, out in the open, with the word of God. We must put a hedge round them, lest they should break out into forbidden and dangerous realms of thought and action. We dare not trust them alone with Jesus Christ. We may allow them to use the phrase, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth"; but we shout around them our own articles so loudly that the voice of the heavenly Master is well-nigh drowned; and, besides, we tell them, to begin with, that they shall, without doubt, perish everlastingly if they receive any doctrine from Him but such as is taught in the creeds. The Christian is thus robbed of his greatest privilege—that of

sitting at the Master's feet, and drinking in for himself the word as it comes direct from His lips. We are guilty, in truth, of what He Himself would have regarded as an intolerable impertinence. Who are you, He is asking us, with eyes of flaming fire, that you should dare to interpose between Me and the least of My disciples?

Why should we any longer maintain an attitude which shows faithlessness towards both God and man? Nay, why should it not be so utterly forsaken in theology as (following the example of the other sciences) to lead to the complete transposition of the terms 'orthodox' and 'heterodox'? The orthodox man in theology is he who pins his faith to dogmas formulated by men in former days; the man who is jealous of any departure from the letter of these ancient standards, and of fresh ways of putting theological truths. Once upon a time a similar view prevailed in science. The man who held stiffly by old nostrums, and especially those of some particular period in the history of the science, was the safe man, the sound man. But now the orthodox man in all other regions of science—in physics, in metaphysics, in astronomy, in geology, in medicine, in psychology, in moral philosophy—is he who, whilst thankfully using the results of past researches, will not consent

to be bound by them, but believing that he has direct access for himself to the original subject-matter of his science, and that fuller illumination is being granted, and better instruments for the elucidation of the truth being employed, gladly welcomes every new help that may offer itself, and every fresh gleam of light that may fall on the loved theme.

Theology must follow in the steps of the other sciences; and instead of branding, as she has so often done, the open mind and heart with ugly names, and visiting those who differ from her with her frowns and punishments, will place all lovers of truth in the honourable position which is their due, encouraging and not discouraging each original investigator in his bold and free researches into the prime factors of religion and of the spiritual life. "True orthodoxy seeks the full blaze of the noontide sun. In the light of such a day the unity of Christendom will be gained."[1] Surely the Church has committed enough of those senseless blunders, in which, having branded her foremost men with heresy, and driven them out of her pale, she has, before long, discovered that these misnamed heretics have just been men who were the first to greet the growing light, in

[1] Cf. *Inspiration and Inerrancy* (Briggs), p. 94.

whose beams the persecuting church has soon been glad to bask.

In this connection the following extract from an address by Professor Gairdner of Glasgow, as President of the British Medical Association, will be perused with interest. It shows the attitude assumed by a scientific mind which is full of reverence for Christianity, whilst yearning for a deliverance for it from the mortmain of dead orthodoxies, similar to that which has enfranchised a great sister science. In speaking on the subject of "The Physician of the Future," he says:

"The physician of the future will, I believe, be much more, instead of less, inclined to make his study of the Bible than hitherto, and in this respect will differ greatly from the representative and typical 'doctour of physike' of the *Canterbury Tales*. But he will study it in the spirit of modern scientific freedom and of historical research, not under the influence of mere tradition and ecclesiastical authority. And thus only, as it seems to me, can the reconciliation of science and religion ever be brought about. In the address I had the honour to deliver last year in Dublin I reproduced a sentence from one more than twenty years old, in which I had said as regards our own historical position at that time (but only in reference to the healing art), 'The day

of orthodoxies is over; the day of real science is only just dawning.' The whole course of that address, as well as of the one which preceded it, was directed towards the demonstration of the enormous evils that have accrued to humanity and to the medical art from a blind reliance upon the tradition of the ages, and often upon traditions wrongly interpreted. . . . The abuses of blood-letting, of a senseless and obstructive polypharmacy, and of innumerable so-called remedies, either inert or positively mischievous, which have had to be cleared out of the way before medical science and practice could even begin to be reasonably simple and intelligible, have been a lesson to all of us, I trust, as to this 'dead hand of medical tradition.' How can we, of all men, fail to see that the same kind of mortmain, precisely the same or similar dead scholastic orthodoxies, have locked up the living words of the New Testament, and of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in formulas around which the dust of ages has accumulated, till the dead letter has well-nigh choked out the living and life-giving spirit of Christianity? The beautiful story of a divine life and death, the miracles of healing, the sermon on the mount, the parable of the prodigal son, with its ever fresh lesson of the Fatherhood of God; that of the good Samaritan,

with its large sense of human brotherhood, are conspicuous by their absence as principles from those creeds of the Church which profess to be the formulated essence of Christian doctrine; and instead of these we have the controversies of the first four centuries, marred and scarred all over with the traces of very human, very bitter, and often sanguinary conflicts; the scrambles for power of this or that bishop, 'lording it over the heritage' in opposition to the very words of St. Peter, and giving to all time an example not of the 'peace and goodwill' with which the first Christmas Day was ushered in, but rather of the sad prophecy 'not peace, but a sword,' which only too truly foreshadowed the ecclesiastical as opposed to the Christian *régime*. The physician of the future will do well if he remembers always the pernicious despotism which has been exercised over his own art (though in a minor degree) by the fetters of these dead orthodoxies, and will therefore be very slow to acknowledge their claims upon him to any more than a historical regard, even in the realm of theology. . . . He will studiously insist upon the Bible, and especially the New Testament, and, above all, the recorded life, words, and works of our Lord Himself, as containing, by implication, the charter of his emancipation, and the only perfectly free religious

atmosphere as yet opened to human thought and inquiry." [1]

It is a notorious fact that under the influences which have been referred to, the old garment of traditionalism is seen by many at the present hour to be worn out, and that it is hopeless to attempt to patch it. At the same time the face of Jesus has become clearer, and is drawing nearer to the men of this generation. And it is being increasingly felt that as He stood up in the days of His flesh and revised, and altered, and in some instances entirely abrogated the traditions of the past, crying, "It hath been said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you"; so now He is appearing anew amongst His followers, saying,—It hath been said by them of more modern times, by the men of the seventeenth century and others, . . . but I say unto you to-day.

Let what is good in the past be conserved; let us not lightly tear down what has cost our fathers much to build up; let there be a solid basis of doctrine; let there be a clearly defined system of theology; let there be a formulated creed if you will. But let us be quite sure that it is the truth only from out the past that we carry with us into the present; let us see to it that our beliefs are

[1] Address delivered in August, 1888.

living things, wrought out by the believer's own heart and brain, and formed, and continually revised, corrected, expanded, in the presence of that Master to whom alone he stands or falls.

And let the terms to which believers are called upon to subscribe for purposes of Communion partake of "the simplicity that is in Christ." Why not go back to the earliest confessions? Why should it not be sufficient to have on the door of the Lord's house only what has been called "the simple latch of Peter," "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," instead of the numerous locks and bolts and bars that theology has put on? Paul has but one all-inclusive formula, "Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," and one that is all-exclusive, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." Where is the necessity for more?

And let the ethical element assume a dominant position in our articles of faith; let the great threefold commandment fill with the full rich blood of its ethical demands the body of doctrine. Let the demand be more for a yearning after righteousness, for fruit, for new-manhood, than for a mere intellectual assent to theological statements. It is in the two directions of the simplification and the ethicizing of the living faith of to-day, and not in any attempted

reconstruction or reimposition of old formulae, that reformation, renewal, advance, may be expected.

Again, great emphasis has been laid by many Christians on the *Church.* They feel that their first duty is to the Church. To augment the Church, to enrich the Church, to glorify the Church, is one of the chief of all religious requirements. To be within the pale of the Church is to be saved ; to be without it is "without doubt to perish everlastingly."

Now if the term 'Church' conveyed the simple yet profound idea which was in the Saviour's mind when He employed it at the first ; if it signified the two or three who are gathered together in Christ's name, full of His Spirit of love to God and man, there would be no objection to the idea of the existence of a close affinity between the Church and Christianity. But when the word bears a narrow and technical signification, a man's view of the 'Church' is apt to become a hindrance rather than a help to true religion. This will be the case (1) when he hands over his eternal interests to the care of Mother Church, under the impression that she will attend to them thoroughly, and leave little or nothing for him to do ; (2) when he comes to believe that religion cannot stand unless it is organized in some particular way, and that God cannot be worshipped except with a certain ritual. Concealed beneath an apparently earnest faith and

fervent zeal there is here a scepticism of the most dangerous kind. There is a lack of faith in the Christian religion itself, its vital power, its marvellous adaptability; and there is a practical denial of the Christian brotherhood of men who, though they do not travel along precisely the same road, yet love the same God, and welcome the same Christ to the soul, and seek meekly and faithfully to obey His commandments. And there is, what is always peculiarly abhorrent to our Lord, an attempt on the part of the disciple to adjudicate on the relationship which his fellow-disciple shall bear to the Master.

Why, instead of the fate of the religion of Jesus being bound up with the fortunes of what arrogantly calls itself the Church, it is possible to contemplate a distinct gain to His cause by the substitution for it of a simpler instrument—a gain in freshness, a gain in the power of reaching out towards God and man, a gain in that fraternal spirit which is the essence of Church life. A Church there must be. We cannot live alone. We cannot shut up any great feeling in our own hearts. We seek for the society of our fellows to share it with us. And least of all can we keep from seeking to unite with others in showing forth the greatest of all the principles that can move the soul, that of religion, and in that purest form in which it issued from the earthly manifestation of

Jesus Christ. Hence the early Church arose not from some external and forced movement, but as the result of the free drawing of heart to heart. Great truths also are made clearer, and sink more deeply into the heart when they are pondered in common by Christian disciples. We shall never know any Christian doctrine as well as it can be known here, till we have striven to comprehend it with all saints.

But the 'Church' idea has, like so many others, left the simplicity and warmth of its origin far behind. The 'Church' frequently bestows more attention on organization than on grace, on outward ritual, than on spirituality. It is found, at times, more anxious to conserve its own interests, and to fence itself round, to the rigid exclusion of all who cannot pronounce its Shibboleth, than to find a common bond of union for all who call Christ Lord, and seek to follow His steps. And it is not only that the 'Church' idea leads to divisions between those who hold it and those who do not; but that it produces within itself new middle walls of partition, or rather rebuilds old ones. There is the distinction between the priests who 'officiate' and the laity who 'communicate'; there is the low church daughter-in-law at variance with the high church mother-in-law, there are questions about modes of ecclesiastical procedure which,

being made authoritative and final, create endless strife and heart burning.

There is need for a reconstruction of the idea on its original basis. It requires to be brought out from amongst the elaborate conceptions which do not merely cling loosely round it, but have come to be regarded as of its very essence. It needs to be emphatically declared, that there is only one thing which makes a body of believers into a church, that it is not a particular system of government, nor the practice of certain rites, nor a special system of doctrine, nor the ability to trace descent from apostolic times, but the presence of the Master. *Ubi Christus ibi Ecclesia.*

Looking at the abuses which churchly views and practices have brought into the realm of pure Christianity, one cannot but feel a certain sympathy with the rough prophetic force which lies in the words, "It was good for the disciples that the body of Christ should depart in order that the Holy Spirit might develop and grow strong within themselves, and the decadence and even death of ecclesiastical bodies will see the birth of a better form in which the Spirit of God will move among men."[1] Or with such sentiments as these: "One of the chief efforts of believers in the present day must be to help to

[1] Anon.

set Christ free from the Church." "Christ stands without any assistance from man as the sun in the sky of history. From Him comes the light that lightens Christendom, only in a very inferior degree from the lanterns lighted by the Church."[1]

There is a tendency, once more, to place special stress on the *history of Christianity*, and to judge the religion of Jesus in its light. Thus learned men point to the numerous attempts that the Church has made in the past to trammel science, and to its fierce persecution of scientific men; benevolently inclined positivists, fervid in their devotion to the service of man, point to the martyr fires that blaze along the line of the Church's march, and its comparative neglect of social questions; moralists expose the fearful state of morals which existed within its pale in what they call "the Ages of Faith"; rationalists, using the term in no offensive sense, refer to the crudities and anomalies of theory and practice which appear with such painful frequency in Church thought and life; and all together formulate out of these materials what they regard as a serious indictment against Christianity.

But when these things are brought forward with the exclamation, "Here is your Christian religion, how can any thoughtful and high-minded man accept

[1] *Still Hours* (Rothe), p. 409, 420.

it?" our reply is, "We absolutely refuse to identify the religion of Jesus of Nazareth with the so-called Christianity of the past." There has been a remnant in every age of the Christian era that has shown itself true to the spirit of Christ; but in many cases it is the spirit of anti-Christ and not of Christ that reveals itself in the pages of the Church historian. One cannot indeed conceive of anything more diametrically opposed both to the letter and spirit of Christ's teaching, than the enormous and pompous organizations, and many of the doctrines and methods of men who pretended to have derived their authority from Him.

The attacks on Christianity which depend for their sting on the revelations of life in ecclesiastical circles in days gone by are beside the mark. The unsavoury details of the lives of professing believers prove, not what adhesion to Christ's principles can produce, but what comes of departure from them, under the cloak which they afford. These men were not Christians at all, in the sense of taking Christ as their leader. And the so-called "Ages of Faith" were not times when men were putting implicit faith in the life-giving Spirit of God; but when they preferred a mere barren intellectual credence in the traditions of the Church, or in some wretched travesties of Bible teaching.

If those who assume a sceptical attitude towards Christianity were to ask themselves in the presence of Jesus Himself, what is the essence of His religion, they might come to see that after all they were not sceptics but believers. We are at one with them in their infidelity, in so far as it looks out on the painful and pitiable history of the Church. But of infidelity to that which the New Testament defines as religion,—to the fruit of the Spirit, to love to God and to man, to the reproduction of the life of Jesus in the soul,—one does not hear a word, nor can there indeed be such a thing among the good and the true.

There is another class of conceptions regarding religion which requires to be touched upon. As there may be undue emphasis laid on places and seasons, on doctrine and practice, to the neglect of others; so there is a tendency to declare that religion has to do with *a part of man's Nature only*, and to leave the rest of it out. You have a particular spot set apart for religion. There only, or there best of all, can you attend to its duties. And so also it is localized within the human personality itself. It is here, not there. God made man of the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life. The body is matter, and matter, it is said, is wholly evil. The seat of religion must

therefore be the spirit, and between the spirit and the body there must be incessant warfare. The body must be kept severely under, and indeed got rid of as far as this is practicable. A hopeless dualism is thus created in human nature and in human life, and there arises the thought that pure religion demands such physical macerations as shall tend to wean the spirit from its connection with sinful flesh.

But the Scripture sets its face steadfastly against this dualistic conception of human nature. Its position is that the body is to be brought into its scheme of sanctification. As the ancient temple had its three courts, each of them consecrated to God, and all of them forming one glorious unity, so man is spirit, soul, and body, and all these are to be sanctified wholly, and preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.[1] To the ascetic spirit the word comes, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?"

Where, again, these dualistic notions do not prevail there may arise some other method of specializing religion, as where it is relegated to some particular inward faculty. To the question, What is the seat of religion? three answers have been returned. It is to be found, according to

[1] 1 Thess. v. 23.

one school of thinking, in the intellect; according to another, in the will; according to a third, in feeling. Religion is a knowing God; it is a willing in conformity with the divine law; it is a feeling of absolute dependence on God.

But the exercise of any one of these faculties on religious objects does not necessarily mean religion. Using the term in the light of what has gone before in this treatise, a man may think long and earnestly on things divine and human, and yet be far from being a religious man. There is even a knowledge of God which is entirely destitute of the first essentials of religion, as in the clear but cold region of *intellectualism*, or in the narrow circles of barren orthodoxy. And there may be a forced exercise of the will in the direction of God which takes a man no further than the province of *external legalism*. Again, if religion is too closely associated with feeling, we may have no more than an unhealthy *sentimentalism*, which weakens rather than strengthens the religious consciousness.

All these theories labour under the defect that they predicate a more complete separation between the several faculties of man's nature than the facts of the case will allow. It is impossible to keep any one of these apart from the others. All feeling, for example, means thought. You cannot feel un-

less you think. And feeling again originates a movement of the will. Or the process may be reversed. "If any man will do (wills to do) His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."[1] The three are one. Thinking, feeling, willing, are in close and vital communication, and it is impossible to put them asunder.

We cannot, therefore, place the seat of religion in any one of them exclusively; nor can we think of religion as a combination of any two of the three, and define it as a unity of knowledge and will, or of knowledge and feeling, or of feeling and will.[2] By so doing we break up the unity of the self-conscious ego which exists and acts in all these simultaneously. The entire man in unbroken unity, and with all its energies, is claimed by Jesus for religion when He calls upon us to love God with the whole heart, and soul, and strength, and mind.

The results of the above investigation and analysis may be briefly indicated. Religion, as Christ taught it, is the most comprehensive and universal of all things. It has no special places or times; for every place and time alike are holy. It has no specially privileged officials; for every individual

[1] John vii. 17.

[2] Cf. *System of Christian Doctrine* (Dorner), II., p. 110. (Clark.)

believer is a priest unto God, holding personal communion with the Divine Head. "This, then, is the Christian ideal: a holy season extending the whole year round—a temple confined only by the limits of the habitable world—a priesthood co-extensive with the human race."[1]

And it would consecrate not only every man, but the whole of each man. Its great question is, "Wilt *thou* (in thy complete undivided personality) be made whole?" "To present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," to bring every thought in every man into "captivity to the obedience of Christ," is the great object of all apostolic labour. "Religion is only another name for the right use of a man's whole self, instead of a wrong use of himself. Religion means that we are to draw out all the stops of our being, and call on Christ to sit at the key-board. It is the utmost possible loftiness of everything you can think, or be, or do" (Beecher). "Religion is the inner act of giving up the whole being and life to God" (Bähr). "Religion lies over them like an all-embracing heavenly canopy; like an atmosphere and life-element which is not spoken of, which in all things is presupposed without speech." It is a "great heaven-high unquestionability *encompassing, interpenetrating the whole life*"

[1] *Epistle to Philippians* (Lightfoot), p. 181.

(Carlyle). Religion, in fine, is not to be regarded as a thing by itself at all; but as a spiritual factor that has to do with all duties, and with all persons, in all places, and at all times. It consists, not in the doing of certain acts called sacred or spiritual, either by oneself or by certain persons called 'priests' or 'clergymen'; but in each individual performing every act from a sacred or spiritual motive. Its call is—Whatsoever ye do, and whensoever ye do it, and wheresoever ye do it, and whosoever ye are that do it, each one of you do *all* to the glory of God.

This view is put before us in the religion of Jesus, which is to be regarded as the absolute religion, because it is the only religion that presents this ideal to men, and gives them power to reach out towards it. We must beware of the imperfect popular signification of the word 'religion.' Jesus cannot be regarded as the founder of a religion, one amongst many, even though we say His was the highest and best. His favourite word is not 'religion' but 'life.' "I am come," He cries, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Jesus never intended His words to be worked up into a dry dogmatic system. They are 'spirit and life.' You cannot think either of His language or of His person in an ecclesiastical garb. To

impart life, moral, spiritual life, a life that would quicken and purify and ennoble all departments of human existence, and each task, however lofty or however humble, that was Christ's vocation. And that must be our conception of His work. We must think of Him as coming to pour into the feeble soul of man the strongest, sweetest, purest, most enduring tide of life that can be conceived of, till its influence shall be felt in every spot, and in every hour, and in every duty: in every fibre of the body, every motion of the soul, every aspiration of the spirit, Godward, manward, self-ward.

And so, whilst in our search for the essence of the Christian religion, it may have appeared as if we were going through a process of elimination, as we have seemed to exclude from its centre one by one things that have by many been regarded, as, if not vital, yet of vast importance; we now see that there is brought under its benignant sway every region of human activity, and every faculty and power of man. Once regarded as confined to places and times, or as a question for Churches and priests, and as standing to a large extent outside the experience of men engaged in worldly pursuits; it is now to be looked upon as a force that is at work always and everywhere, in all men, in every part of man, in the world as well as in the Church, in the bustle

of the market-place, as well as in the dim religious light, and the solemn hush of the great Cathedral, amid all the engagements of our life, social, business, personal, amidst all the events, joyful or sorrowful, of our lot.

Long ago it was prophesied that the mere local and temporary character which religion displayed under the conditions imposed on it by the crudeness and limitations of the times would be done away. "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, *Holiness unto the Lord*; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts."[1] The general trend of Christian thought is to lift religion out of its limited sphere, and to look upon it as the subtle all-pervading atmosphere which is the vital breath of everything, of all work, as well as of all worship.

We can only hope to make this ideal real by taking our stand beside Jesus as He enunciates the great three-fold commandment. Here you have nothing that is merely local and temporary, you have not even anything that is specifically religious or theological in the ordinary acceptation of these terms. But, given a man who endeavours to keep this commandment, holding the example of Christ

[1] Zechariah xiv. 20, 21.

before him, taking advantage of the work Christ has done to open up the way to full possession of the treasures that are indicated in it, casting himself by faith on that Spirit of truth and power which imparts both light and life, and you have one who is striving to fulfil all the duties that religion can lay down.

Throughout the New Testament you never lose sight of this great ideal. Promulgated first at Jacob's well, it is sounded abroad by the apostles. They proclaim loudly that "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands"; they denounce those who "observed days, and months, and seasons, and years." And as long as such things are regarded as of the *essence* of God's message to man in the gospel, or as having an intrinsic value in themselves, they obscure the idea of Christian worship, and must be treated still in the same way.

It is otherwise, however, when they are regarded as *means* and not *ends*, when they are looked upon as aids to a faith which already worketh by love. Under such circumstances they appear before us in a new light, in which it is seen that they are to be used and prized as helpful, and indeed as indispensable to the highest efficacy of the Church, and the greatest spiritual efficiency of the individual believer. "Everything in its own order." Nowhere is the

force of this maxim more felt than in this region. "I go to church, therefore I am a Christian." Here, going to church is regarded as the source of a man's religion, or as the infallible sign that he possesses it. "I am a Christian, therefore I go to church." Here, the root of the matter is first of all in the man, and he finds the courts of the Lord's house to be a means of grace, a stimulus to his devotion. "I keep the Sunday; I have been baptized and attend regularly to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; I have put my thoughts on theological subjects into systematic form, therefore I am a Christian." Such things furnish no proof whatever that we are Christ's. We may amidst them all be "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Away with them as signs of acceptance with God; if we trust in them for salvation we are undone. But, repudiated as substitutes for true religion, they come trooping back, and are welcomed and thankfully used by all who, sitting down at the feet of Jesus to learn of Him the art of loving, perceive them to be divinely-appointed instruments for quickening and developing the God-given life.

CHAPTER X

SOME LEADING DOCTRINES

THERE is still another direction in which we can turn the search-light of the law of Love. The chief doctrines of Christianity might be brought under its beams. It may be questioned whether the full contents of this rule of life have always been kept in view when these doctrines were being formulated by men. Let us test some of them by it. We confine our attention to those which have a close connection with the great three-fold commandment, and, more especially, with the second, "which is like unto the first." These doctrines have been fully dealt with in the light of the one commandment, they have not been as adequately examined in the light of the other.

Take, to begin with, the *Doctrine of Sin.*

It is only in the conscious presence of God that sin appears at all; and it is only where that pre-

sence is clearly manifest that it is seen to be "exceeding sinful." The consciousness of sin comes and goes, waxes and wanes with the consciousness of God. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God"; and as a necessary result, "Fools make a mock at sin." Where the conception of God is adumbrated or scattered, as in Pantheistic or Polytheistic systems, there is little true knowledge of sin. The doctrine of sin reached its greatest clearness and definiteness in the ancient world among the Jews, because they attained to the commanding idea of One Living Personal God, whose eye runs to and fro over all the earth, to whom every man must give an account.

But though the first cry of the penitent soul must be, "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned," the consciousness of the sinner must include the human relationship as well as the divine. Whatever may have been the genesis of the phrase just quoted, there had been a gross moral wrong committed by the man who uttered it, a wrong which affected both himself and his fellows. Was the fifty-first psalm written by David after his double crime of murder and adultery? there was the wrong done to Bathsheba, whom he had tempted to her ruin; there was the foul crime committed against Uriah, whom he had betrayed to his doom; there were the concurrent

sins against the honour of his family, whose good name he had tarnished, and against his kingdom whose prestige had been dishonoured in him its head; and there was the sin against his own person which he had polluted and degraded.

It was these social and personal matters that formed the direct occasion of sin. So that though it is right to say, "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned," it is well to remember that it is through his neighbour and himself that a man sins against God. There is an identification of God with men indicated in the Bible which is wonderfully close and vital. "When ye sin against the brethren," says Paul, "and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ."[1] "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."[2]

Or if it be maintained that in certain sins we aim a direct blow at the Divine Being, even then, if the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God be accepted, it must be allowed, that the injuries which men inflict on their brethren, or on their own natures, must be more grievous to God than those which affect Himself only. An earthly father is more deeply hurt by an insult or a wrong done to one of

[1] 1 Corinthians viii. 12. [2] 1 Corinthians iii. 16, 17.

his children, than by any affront that may be offered to his own person. And is the Father which is in heaven less closely identified with the members of His family than we are with ours? Is not the whole Scripture alive with the feelings which fill the great Father's heart, as He looks down on the treatment to which His own are subjected here below? The three—God, neighbour, self, in the region where sin prevails, are seen to be one. It is against God that we sin, but it is mediately, not immediately; it is through those who bear His image upon earth.

Think of how 'self' and 'neighbour' supply the warp and woof of sin. Suppose man had no lower self, that he had no flesh to strive against the Spirit, or that the flesh were completely subdued; one large portion of the sins which are committed would cease to be. The angels that have never fallen; the spirits of the just *made* perfect; those who have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," do not sin any more. Jesus, in whom there was no such dualism as we have indicated, said, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." He had previously asked the Jews, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"

Or suppose again, that man had no neighbour, or that he had come into a perfect relationship with him, another large section of the sins which can be

committed would disappear. Where there is no society there is no sin; or where there is an ideal social fabric, as in heaven, there is no sin.

Men have recognized this fact, and have sought to escape out of the range of temptation by attempting to get rid of the lower nature, or by cutting themselves off from intercourse with their fellowmen, and living a solitary life. But the trouble with the ascetic, the anchorite, the recluse, is that he carries his own unsanctified or only partially sanctified nature with him into the desert, so that the same lusts and passions which weakened and vexed him when he was face to face with men, arise in his heart there, sometimes in a more aggravated form. Witness the famous temptations of St. Anthony. The only way to overcome such sins is for a man to be crucified with Christ, and to seek unbroken fellowship with his brethren in the fellowship of the Father.

In order to see how closely the three requirements of the great law of love are connected in this region, let us look back to the account of the origin of sin as recorded in the Book of Genesis. The first great sin, that of Adam, as there reported, was a breaking of the first commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"; the second, that of Cain, was a breaking of the second, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." They were both sins against

man's own nature, and so a breaking of the third, "Thou shalt love thyself."

Now mark what is said to follow these transgressions. In each case a searching question is put to the transgressor. To Adam it is, "Where art thou?" to Cain, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" There had been an attempt made in both instances to do away with a necessary part of the soul's environment; in the one it was God, in the other, man. And the question that is put in each case is meant to recall the lost man to a consciousness of the fact that he had cut himself off from the sources of his true life. "Where art thou?" "Where is Abel, thy brother?" these are the articulate queries, whilst involved in them is the primary question, "Where, in what you have done, is your God?" Have you had Him in your thoughts at all?

Note, also, the punishment that is meted out, "He drove out the man." That is what is said regarding Adam. "Behold," cries Cain, "Thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth." The transgressors had chosen to sever themselves by their sins from their heavenly or earthly environment; and their punishment consists in an aggravation of the sense of deprivation. They are "driven out," in the one case, from the presence of God, in the other from the face of man. Read

this as history or as myth, it is true to the constant experience of man. This isolation of the evildoer is always a marked feature in connection with sin.

The same truths are taught in the words of Jesus. We have already seen that there are two prodigals in the parable. The one drifts away from his father's side, returning afterwards with penitential tears; the other, retaining his place to all appearance in the home, makes himself a prodigal. By refusing to meet his brother he shut himself out from his father's heart and from his own true self, and had as much need as his despised brother to say, "I have sinned."

Look through the prophetical books, and ask yourself as you read, what the writers meant to signify by the terms sin, iniquity, transgression. You will observe that what may be called theological sins are never referred to. There is not in the Bible a solitary reference to that class of doctrinal aberrations which is continually receiving the anathemas of the Church. What is meant by sin is not the commission or omission of some deed that is regarded as relating exclusively to God; not the failure to perform what we call religious rites; not the holding of a doctrinal position which is out of harmony with the ideas of the ruling majority of the hour; but it is a rupture of the vital bond which should exist between man and man, or an abuse of a man's own nature.

Not that there is ever any question as to the necessity of maintaining our allegiance to God. This personal loyalty is held up as the first and absolutely fundamental condition; but the teaching is, that this relationship to God is made most clearly apparent, and is best maintained, or most violently ruptured, in our relationship with men.

There is nothing in literature to equal for startling invective these verses of the first chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth: they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you

clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." God is here exhibited as scorning the advances of the worshippers, as loathing their offerings. Why? Because of the manner in which they were dealing with their fellowmen and abusing their own natures.

In similar fashion the prophet Amos is found saying, "For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right. . . . Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph."[1]

Sin is something that injures some person. Man injures himself by it, and it is an offence against his brother, as well as a wrong done to God. Iniquities are personal hurts. They wound others, they destroy ourselves. They always do both. At one time it is the injury to oneself that appears most prominent, at another the injury to our neighbour, at another the insult to God. But in all sin there is

[1] Amos v. 12-14.

the three-fold wrong committed. And it is because of that, and not because of some feeble blow aimed directly at Himself, that "God is angry with the wicked every day."

In the ten commandments there is only one, the first, that relates directly to God. In the list of the works of the flesh given by the Apostle Paul in the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians, out of seventeen which are named, eleven are offences against our neighbour: adultery, fornication, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies (that is, schisms), envyings, murders; four may be regarded as injuries committed directly against oneself: uncleanness, lasciviousness, drunkenness, revellings, and even in these the neighbour is involved. We cannot injure ourselves without harming the community in which we live. At the same time all of them are against self, for a man injures himself every time he wrongs his neighbour or offends against God; and all of them are against God, because He looks upon every injury done to His children as done to Himself.

The proportion of sins against others which is found here is significant. Nor does this passage stand alone, for it will be found that it is in this form that sin is mainly judged in the Bible. It is in the region of transgression against our neighbours,

therefore, that the effects of sin are to be gauged. It is here also that men are most really and genuinely convicted of sin. Conviction of sin springs up for the first time in all its sharpness when a man perceives that he has failed to maintain proper relations with his fellows.[1]

In this connection we would revert again to the new kind of sin that arises in the teaching of Jesus, which consists not in the commission of actual transgressions, but in the omission of good deeds. Christ has little to say to the gross and palpable evildoer. This individual has already been dealt with in legal enactments. Jesus enters into an unexplored region of morals, and brings out into a new light the sin of failing to do what is right

[1] "Very slight words and deeds may have a sacramental efficacy if we can cast our self-love behind us in order to do them. And it has been well believed through many ages that the beginning of compunction is the beginning of a new life; that the mind which sees itself blameless may be called dead in trespasses, *in trespasses on the love of others*, in trespasses on their weakness, in trespasses on all those great claims which are the image of our own need."—*Felix Holt* (G. Eliot), p. 141.

> "Hope not the cure of sin till self is dead,
> Forget it in love's service, and the debt
> Thou canst not pay, the angels shall forget;
> Heaven's gate is shut to him who comes alone,
> Save thou a soul, and it shall save thine own."
>
> *Ben Ezra* (R. Browning).

and good. And He does not merely refer to this failure as one particular sin to be reckoned amongst others; He makes it the cardinal sin in His kingdom, the outstanding sign of guilt. In the judgment scene depicted in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew there is not a single word said about open or violent sin; not a syllable about imperfect views of truth. There is one charge brought against "those on the left hand." "*Ye did it not.*" Ye did not do the good ye might have done. They had not purposely starved any, but they gave the hungry no meat; they did not cruelly drive the stranger from their door, but they did not take him in; they did not strip or rob or oppress any one, but they passed the wounded wayfarer on life's highway on the other side. In the only glimpse into the "place of torment" that we have in Christ's teaching, there is no charge brought against the rich man of crime or vice, or open sin, or heretical opinion. He lived well; but it is not said that he lived wantonly, nor that he broke any of the commandments. There is no reason given why he should "lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment," but that he left his poor, helpless fellow-creature to waste away at his gate in poverty and disease.

Let it be understood, then, when we are dealing with sin, that it is a new law under which those

live who call themselves the disciples of Jesus Christ. There is no other criterion of a man's moral state in Christianity than the positive one of active love. There are still many Christian people who fail to judge themselves by this standard. They will tell you that they have never done anything that is flagrantly bad. They have not been profane swearers or scoffers; they have not led others astray into the paths of wickedness; they have not given way to fiery or unclean passion. On the whole, they have led decent quiet lives. And because of this they not only fail to regard themselves as sinners, but take credit to themselves for being good Christians. But in reckoning after this fashion they are not judging themselves by the law of Christ at all. He wants something more than negatives. He demands acts of goodness at the hands of His people, springing from positive love in their hearts. The question with Him first and last is not—What evil have you left undone? But—What actual helpful service have you done?

How the heart of Jesus throbs with positive human feeling! What indignation He shows against those who are found breaking the bonds of humanity. Lovelessness is to Him a crying iniquity, one of the two outstanding evils of the human heart; the other being hypocrisy. How the lightnings of His

wrath blaze out against this sin, as seen in the hard-hearted Pharisee, or the cold, indifferent Sadducee! The Christian Church has not at all times put this evil in the position given to it by her Head. She has ever shown herself anxious to get man placed in a proper relationship to God. But she has often failed to perceive that it is only through man that this relationship can be adequately formed and maintained. Where in the history of the Church do we read of trials for the heresy of failing to help others? When do you hear of trials of Priest or Levite for passing the needful or suffering on the highway? Where have you cases of Church discipline on members because they did not obey Christ's new commandment, "That ye love one another"? Yet Jesus regards such omissions as constituting the damning sins in His religion.

Let us consider now the *Doctrine of the Atonement* under the influence more particularly of the emphasis that is given to Christ's new commandment. If we were confined to one word in which to express the work of Christ, we could not select a better than this term, "At-one-ment." Reconciliation is the watchword of Christianity. The culminating desire, the supreme hope of Christ, is breathed forth in the words to which we have already referred, "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art

in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." It was for the realization of this yearning that Jesus lived and died; it is for this that He carries on His intercessory work in heaven; and that His spirit strives in the hearts of men. What a vision of this work Paul had! With him it included not this world only but all worlds. "And, having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven."[1] A vast and magnificent conception! We need for its comprehension the help of all saints, the contributions of every man who loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Who has not felt thankful for any help towards its understanding, whatever may have been the quarter from which it has come?

The Godward side of this great subject has had ample justice done to it in theology. The manward side has not received that share of attention which is its due. It has indeed at times been so completely lost sight of, that men calling themselves Christians have imagined that they could be reconciled to God, without aiming at reconciliation with their brethren, or at personal sanctification.

Now, it has been our aim in this treatise to show that the Scriptures teach throughout that we

[1] Colossians i. 20.

cannot have God without man. We have found, consequently, that when, following the death of Christ, the Spirit of adoption began to witness with the spirits of men, the fraternal spirit was also exhibited in a clearer light, and the barriers between man and man began to fall away. There are not a few passages in the epistles which call attention to this phase of our Lord's atonement. Take that section of the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, which begins with the thirteenth verse. The apostle is speaking of the new relationship between Jew and Gentile, which has been established in Christ. After referring to the time past when the Gentiles were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise," he says, "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." [1]

The act which furnished God with a channel for the free forthcoming of His mercy and love, and which gave all men access to Him, tended, at the same time, to clear away all the obstacles which stood in the path of the fullest and completest human fellowship. The incentive given by the

[1] Eph. ii. 13, 14.

forgiveness of sins, and by the uninterrupted vision of God which men have obtained through this rent veil, to keep the first commandment, creates the incentive to keep the "second which is like unto it." The cross is the sign and seal of reconciliation to man, as well as of reconciliation to God. "He is our peace," because He puts our hand in that of God and of our fellowmen at the same time. The doctrine of the brotherhood of man is inextricably bound up with the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and the glory of the cross of Christ.

Now, whilst there had been a certain amount of outward preparation for this doctrine before the advent of Christ, He was the first to make "the enthusiasm of humanity" a working factor in society. "He hath made both one," said the apostle. And the world beheld this realized in every Christian assembly. At the table of their common Lord, men and women of all nationalities, of all classes and conditions, met in closest fellowship. There were here no divisions or distinctions. They met together as brethren, conscious only of the bond that united them to Christ and to one another.

And this communion service was the sign of a spirit that was beginning to penetrate all parts of the social organism. Who can measure the influence

of the great reconciling work of Christ throughout the centuries, in breaking down distinctions between men or in keeping them from springing up? The idea of the rights of man as man is of Christian origin, and whatever effect it has had on communities is due to Christ. You have, in the ancient world, the rights of favoured individuals insisted on, the rights of the king, or the master, or the rich, or, the man, or the adult. But what revolutions has Christianity wrought in the relation between the governor and the governed, between master and slave, between employer and employed, between class and class, between man and woman, between husband and wife, between parent and child!

There is much yet to be done before the ideal is realized. But the at-one-ment of man with man the world over, which was one of the chief ends that Jesus had before Him in His teaching and in His death; the salvation of man, not only from the active attacks of envy, malice, and all uncharitableness; but also from the chilling breath of coldness and indifference, is nearer than when we believed. The tide of altruism has been rising, if slowly, yet surely, and is destined yet to sweep away all barriers which prevent the union of mankind in one great brotherhood.

The *Doctrine of Regeneration* comes also under

review. The first commandment holds almost undisputed sway in this province in theological treatises. We are being continually reminded of the necessity of loving God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, in order to be fully renewed in the spirit of our mind. Now it is well to begin with God, but it is not in accordance with His own directions that we should end with Him. We must remind ourselves, here as elsewhere, that the second is "like unto it" namely this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The equal reign of these two commandments in the New Testament doctrine of Regeneration is made evident from the fact, that the proofs of the existence of the new life in the soul are divided between them. How do we know that we are born again? Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; but equally because the love of man has taken possession of our nature. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."[1] But we also "Know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."[2]

There is a curious interlacing of the two great laws in the Epistles of John, pointing to the fact that they must have been held in his mind as one

[1] Romans viii. 16. [2] 1 John iii. 14.

indivisible conception. Thus, if we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren; then conversely, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments."[1] One encounters remarkable turns of expression which show how vital was the connection in the apostle's mind between the two laws. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"[2] We would naturally expect here "how dwelleth the love of man in him?" Such an individual as is here depicted, we would say, is without a spark of humanity. But no; it is "how dwelleth the love of God in him?" he is not in touch with the divine nature. "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship *one with another*."[3] We look for the words "with Him" instead of "one with another." And this reading has actually been found, and is supported by such names as Tertullian, Clement of Rome, etc.

Now it is for the Church faithfully and consistently to adopt the standpoint of the Apostle John in this region, and to make the branches of the two-fold commandment thus virtually one. Has

[1] 1 John v. 2. [2] 1 John iii. 17. [3] 1 John i. 6, 7.

she done so? What is the usual proof that is demanded for regeneration, for conversion? Is it humanity? Is it increase of loving-kindness towards one's fellows? Is this taken into account at all in many instances? Is it not the case that all that is frequently required of the professing Christian is belief in certain propositions about God?

It is essential that there be an intelligent adherence to truths about God and divine things; but if no more than this can be shown, there is absolutely no evidence of that change which is called passing from death unto life. For a man to be truly awakened he must realize the claims of his fellows, as well as those of God. It is, indeed, the human, the moral, the social, which decides the matter, and not the theological. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love."[1]

A man is said to be 'awakened,' 'converted.' To what is he awakened? To a clearer sense of his relation to God only? He is more assiduous in his devotions. That is well. But is he more thoughtful and considerate to the members of his household? Do his business associates discern in him a more fair and brotherly method of trading?

[1] 1 John iv. 7, 8.

If a person is a Christian *the love of God and man* will be shed abroad in his heart, and the love of man will be the outstanding evidence that the love of God exists within. "By *this* shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." Am I denying myself, bearing the burdens of others, and so fulfilling the law of Christ? Am I willing to be servant of all, to lay down my life for the brethren? Is this mind in me which was also in Christ Jesus? Do I, like Him, 'stoop to conquer'? Do I please my neighbour for his good to edification? And is this altruistic tendency gathering strength with the years, till it is fast becoming a second nature? These are the New Testament 'theological tests.' If a man can stand them he has evidence that he is being "regenerated by the Holy Ghost." Other signs are of little avail.

CHAPTER XI

SOME LEADING DOCTRINES—Continued

The *Doctrine of Prayer* requires also to be reviewed in the light of Christ's central principle. Prayer is the indication of the soul's intercourse with God. It is the yearning of the child to pour out all its longings into the sympathetic ear of the Father, to surrender everything into His hands. It is the human spirit moving itself quietly, confidently, joyfully, in the near and felt presence of the Divine Spirit. It is the maintenance of such an inward stillness and expectancy as causes the soul to look out for some manifestation of the divine glory, or some gift of the divine love, or some whisper of the still small voice. "My soul," is the cry of the man who is in the spirit of prayer, "Wait thou only on God," literally, "Be thou silence to God"; still in thee the clamour of passion, the restless motions of self-will, the lofty imaginations of the mind; get away from the strife of tongues, and the pride of

man, and lie like Samuel before the Lord, saying, "Speak, for Thy servant heareth."

The main thing required, then, for effectual fervent prayer is conscious access to God. If that is free and uninterrupted, prayer "availeth much." We are taught in the New Testament that the path between God and man has been completely opened up through Jesus Christ. But consider what this involves. Man must have an open door in all the directions to which continual reference is being made in these pages, before his way to God can be made straight and plain to his feet. He must aim at the removal of obstructions in his own nature, and he must do what in him lies to get into proper relationship with his fellowmen.

The first of these conditions everyone takes for granted. Very soon in the history of God's dealings with His people the state of mind and heart and life in which the worshipper approached Him, came to be looked upon as of much more importance than any outward observance, till finally it became the one great essential. "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; . . . burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come; . . . I delight to do Thy will, O, my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart."[1] "The sacrifices of God are

[1] Psalm xl. 6-8.

a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."[1] These are specimens of many similar passages in the Old Testament Scriptures. They all show that the necessity of attending to the state of the heart and life was early felt in relation to intercourse with God.

The second condition, however, has not received as much attention as its place in the sacred record demands. How clearly and fully it is taught throughout the Bible! Go back to the earliest attempt at approaching God of which we hear. Why was the sacrifice of Abel accepted and that of Cain rejected? The usual answer, that it was because Abel offered blood and Cain did not, is a very unsatisfactory one. It was because Cain was, at the very time he was presenting his gift at the altar, cherishing enmity in his heart towards his brother. And it may be quite legitimately said, that had the relative positions of these two brothers towards each other been reversed, and had Abel proved the breaker of the second commandment instead of Cain, the bloodless offering of the latter would have been accepted, and the bloody sacrifice of the former spurned.

Pass down to the prophetic era. Were such passages as the one already referred to in the

[1] Psalm li. 17.

chapter on the doctrine of sin, viz., Isaiah i. 10-17, duly pondered, men would not be in any doubt as to what are the conditions of acceptable divine service. The ruling men in Jerusalem imagined that they had only to attend rigorously to the external rites and ceremonies of their religion in order to have free access to God. They are soon undeceived. In language that cuts with the keenest edge, these men are told, that until matters are put right in their own hearts and lives, and between them and their fellowmen, not only will their sacrifices and offerings, their rites and ceremonies, their prayers and supplications be rejected, but these will actually add to their guilt. They will be looked upon as just so many more abominations practised by them in the sight of the Lord.

These men were trying to do what many are attempting to-day, to separate religion from morality, and, more particularly, to sever love to God from love to man. Men still pile their sacrifices high on the altar; they haunt the courts of the sanctuary; they keep all the holy days; they make many prayers. It is all in vain. God cannot away with it. Why? Because they are attempting to enter in at one of the three doors whilst the other two are shut. You must see to yourselves; you must get into proper relationships

with those who are around you, and more especially with the down-trodden and the oppressed, the labouring and heavy laden, cries God, before I can listen to one of your requests, or suffer you to come near to Me.

The word of the Lord comes to Jeremiah in a similar strain. Read the whole of the seventh chapter of his prophecy. Not only is the prayer of these worshippers forbidden till they amend their ways and their doings, and "thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour"; but even prayer by others for them is forbidden. "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to Me: for I will not hear thee."[1] Those who will break the sacred bond that should subsist between man and man are told, that neither the prayer they offer for themselves, nor the prayer that is offered by others for them, are heard or answered.

The other prophets echo the same sentiment: "I hate," says the word of the Lord through the prophet Amos, "I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from Me the

[1] Jeremiah vii. 16.

noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." [1]

"And the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speakest the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. . . . Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts." [2] (Cf. Micah iii. 1-4; vi. 5-8.)

Fasting is by many closely connected with prayer as a means of bringing the soul nearer to God. But here again it is taught that whenever the command to love one another is broken, fasting is worse than vain. "Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an

[1] Amos v. 21-24. [2] Zechariah vii. 8-13.

acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer: thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am."[1]

The 'service of man' verily is no novel idea reserved for a positivist author of the nineteenth century to introduce as the religion of the future, which is to overturn and supersede that of the past. It is found in all its fulness and glory in these old Hebrew prophets. But instead of this service of man being dissociated from the service of God, *it is* the service of God, and the only service, indeed, that makes man acceptable in His sight. The two forms of service are never separated in the Word of God. They have been sundered, doubtless, in the words and deeds of

[1] Isaiah lviii. 4-9 (cf. 9-14).

Christians, and in the teaching and practice of the Church; but we are not to take the misunderstandings and malpractices of men as our guide. Let the Word of the Lord alone be a lamp unto our feet.

Our Lord's teaching on this inseparable union of the two acts is clearly brought out in such passages as the following: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."[1] "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."[2] "And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."[3]

From these extracts it follows: That the only prayers one can hope to get answered are those which begin, "Our Father," those which are breathed from hearts that are at one with all mankind; and, what is more, that there is the imminent risk of a man calling down by his prayers maledictions on himself, when he attempts to approach God without

[1] Matthew vi. 12. [2] Mark xi. 25, 26.
[3] Matthew xviii. 34, 35.

at least making an earnest and resolute effort to get into sympathetic touch with his fellows.

What does the petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," mean but this, that we are asking the same measure to be meted out to us that we bestow upon our neighbour, so that if we are vowing vengeance in our heart against him when we approach God, we are calling down similar vengeance from heaven upon our own heads.[1]

It is here that we meet with a striking distinction between the religion and morality of the ancient world and that of Christ. To cherish the unforgiving spirit is with Jesus the deadliest of sins. Now, whilst in the world to which Christ came, forgiveness might be common in domestic and family life, it was never practised beyond a very limited area. Nay, what is more, it was not approved. "People not only did not forgive their enemies, but did not wish to do so, nor think better of themselves for having done so. That man considered himself fortunate who on his death-bed could say, in reviewing his past life, that no one had done more good to his friends, or more mischief to his enemies."[2]

[1] Compare the prayer of the unforgiving man in *The Lord's Prayer* (Hare), p. 72.

[2] *Ecce Homo*, p. 273.

The unforgiving spirit constituted, as we have seen, no barrier to the approach of the heathen worshipper to his god. No devotee in the temple of Jupiter or Venus was ever asked to leave his gift before the altar, first be reconciled to his brother, and then come and offer his gift. On the contrary, the spirit of revenge was regarded as well-pleasing to the gods.

This distinction is quite as marked in regard to personal purity. The very sacrifices which were rejected with such scorn by the Jewish Jehovah on account of the impurity of the offerer, would have been welcomed by the Phoenician Baal, or the Greek Aphrodite, or the Roman Jove, who were found, indeed, making that self-same impurity which kept the Hebrew worshipper outside the gates of his Zion one of the main conditions of entrance into their courts. Let no man imagine that he can have access to the Father by the new and living way which Christ hath consecrated for us, and which can only be kept open by the Spirit of God dwelling in us, unless he is also aiming at having access to his brethren, and to his own purer, higher, self.

The *Doctrine of the Church.* The germ idea of the Church is a very simple one. We find scarcely any reference to it in the Gospels. The word Ecclesia occurs only twice there, in both instances in

Matthew's Gospel. "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."[1] "Moreover if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. . . . And if he shall neglect to hear thee, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."[2]

In the first of these passages there is nothing whatever said as to the constitution or working of the Church; in the second, reference is made to an informal meeting of the congregation of the faithful for the restoration of brotherly relationships. In neither case is organization or administration, or any of the numberless ecclesiastical forms and usages and ceremonies, which the term 'Church' now calls up to mind, as much as hinted at.[3]

[1] Matthew xvi. 18. [2] Matthew xviii. 15-17.

[3] "The signs of the kingdom are all spiritual and ethical, relate to gracious helpfulness and service, never to officers or acts of ceremonial . . . the emphasis falls not upon officials, if officials there be . . . but upon the people, upon persons, their personal qualities, conduct, character, their state and living before God, their behaviour and ministry among men."—*Christ in Modern Theology* (Fairbairn), 517. "Jesus provided no ecclesiastical constitution, issued no authoritative instruction concerning forms of church government, clerical offices and orders, and even worship."—*The Kingdom of God* (Bruce), 270

Our Lord, indeed, never seems to have meant to constitute any organization which should insist upon the distinction between clergy and laity, or which should, as a corporation, dictate to its members or to the world what their faith and ritual should be, or aim at hierarchical powers.

When we pass from the Gospels to the Acts and the Epistles,—including the Apocalypse, we find that the features which characterize the Church are personal and social, not sacerdotal or ecclesiastical. Reference is made to "the perfecting" of the saints, to "the edifying of the body." Agencies are named as being created for this great end; but these are all composed of individuals standing in some relation to the truths that are to be unfolded, not of officials appointed for purposes of ecclesiastical administration. "Not lords over God's heritage, but as being ensamples to the flock." They are apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers, men appointed by God, not orders instituted by men. "The true ecclesiastical life, and the true Christian life, and the true human life, are all one and the same."[1]

[1] "There is no trace in the New Testament that ordinances on this subject (*i.e.* offices and officers in the Ecclesia) were set up as permanently binding by the twelve, or by St. Paul, or by the Ecclesia at large. The lesson-book of the Ecclesia, and of every ecclesia, is not a law, but a history."—*The Christian Ecclesia*, a course of lectures on the early history and early conceptions of the Ecclesia. T. G. A. Hort, D.D.

The outstanding feature of the Church is the *personnel* of its members, their mutual devotion to Christ, which showed itself in tender and thoughtful service to each other. The love principle was to be the mark by which the Church was to be distinguished from the world. This central idea of the Church was kept clearly before the members of the young Christian communities in the apostolic age. Although there is little said with regard to that external machinery which afterwards occupied so much attention, there is continual reference to this social element. The names by which the body of believers was distinguished pointed constantly to the bond of brotherhood. The equality of all the members in the sight of their Head was strenuously insisted on.

It was not long, however, before this simple yet sublime idea of the Church began to undergo modification. The image of Christ, once so clear and dominant, became, through time, less distinct. And with this change came a weakening of the essential conceptions of the brotherhood and the common priesthood of believers, till the idea of the Church with which Christianity started was buried beneath a mass of ecclesiastical forms, or abstract formulae.

We do not stop to inquire as to how these sprang

up and acquired prominence. There may have been times in the past when the Church was obliged to organize in a certain way, and to unite on doctrinal tests for its own safety, if not for its very life. The mind, too, active in every region, becomes particularly so when it is brought into the presence of great divine truths, and feels a necessity laid upon it to reduce the mass brought before it to some kind of order. Let us not think contemptuously of these efforts in the past. They were inevitable. They were the outcome of conditions which could not be escaped. And they have no doubt ranged themselves amongst the all things which work together for good to them that love God.

At the same time, for a Christian at the present day to insist on the observance of certain forms and regulations, which have no sanction whatever given them by Christ Himself, and to say, that unless these are observed there can be no salvation and no fraternal intercourse, is an outrage upon the fundamental idea of the Christian religion. Let such matters be regarded in their due place in the proportion of "the truth as it is in Jesus." Let not mere economical arrangements which still form matter for dispute, even in the churches which hold them most tenaciously, and which are at the best but more or less imperfect means to the end,

stand in the way of the laying hold of the vital elements of the faith. Above all, let them not interfere with the knitting together of true Christian hearts. How often has the Church idea alienated rather than united Christians. Men who will do business together, who will dine together, will not worship together, because of some views of church order or government, which Christ never referred to, and of which one may venture to say He never dreamt. Better to go right back to Him, and have the Church idea reduced to the very simplest elements, than fall into an ecclesiasticism which tends to sunder believers. "For there is a true Church wherever one hand meets another helpfully, and that is the only holy or Mother Church which ever was or ever shall be."[1]

The *Doctrine of the Ordinances.* These means of grace were instituted by Christ for the purpose of assisting the believer to enter into more vital correspondence with his environment. Their significance consists in the manner in which they help to open up to us the three spheres in which we live, and move, and have our being—the doors to which are so often barred by our own ignorance, frailty, or sin.

Jesus left as a legacy to His disciples two rites,

[1] *Sesame and Lilies* (Ruskin), p. 86.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The first has to do with the entrance of the believer into the kingdom of God; the second to his continuance therein. The one is the symbol of the new birth; the other of the life which is daily being sustained by the bread that comes down from heaven. Let us look at each of these in the light of man's three-fold relationship.

And, first, Baptism (*a*) as it relates to self. At one time it is likened to a grave in which the old man is buried, and out of which there is a resurrection into newness of life.[1] "Our baptism was a sort of funeral; a solemn act of consigning us to that death of Christ in which we are made one with Him."[2] "Baptism is the grave of the old man and the birth of the new. As he sinks beneath the baptismal waters the believer buries there all his corrupt affections and past sins; as he emerges thence he rises regenerate, quickened to new hopes and a new life." "The sacrament of baptism as administered in the apostolic age involved a two-fold symbolism, a death or burial and a resurrection. In the rite itself these were represented by two distinct acts, the disappearance beneath the water, and the emergence from the water."[3] Or again, baptism is likened to the bridal

[1] Romans vi. [2] Cf. Sanday's *Romans*, p. 157.
[3] *Colossians* (Lightfoot), p. 250, 274.

bath in which the Church is washed that she may be made ready to be presented to the bridegroom.[1] Or it is looked upon as a means of preparing the nature for the entrance of the Holy Spirit. The self that we are enjoined to love is the new self. "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."[2]

(β) Baptism as it brings the believer into relationship with others. It is regarded as the means of entrance into the Christian community. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body."[3] Baptism is the sign and pledge that all barriers between man and man are broken down. The separated sections of humanity, Jews, Gentiles, bond, free, pass, through this rite, into the fellowship of the one Spirit.

(γ) Baptism as it brings us into relationship with God or Christ. The believer is baptized into the name (the sphere, the influence, the power) of the Lord Jesus Christ. Or, if we are to take the full formula as authentic, he is baptized "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

[1] Eph. v. 26 (Cf. Meyer *in loc.*). Cf. 1 Corinthians vi. 11; Titus ii. 5; Hebrews x. 22. [2] Romans vi. 4.
[3] 1 Corinthians xii. 13.

The first and third of these references are vividly brought before us in the opening verses of the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Speaking of the doctrine of the mystical union with Christ in His death and resurrection which appears in this passage, the commentary, to which I have already referred, says, "Here came in to help the peculiar symbolism of Baptism. An imagination as lively as St. Paul's soon found in it analogies to the same process. That plunge beneath the running waters was like a death; the moment's pause whilst they swept overhead was like a burial; the standing erect once more in air and sunlight was a species of resurrection. Nor did the likeness reside only in the outward rite, it extended to its inner significance. To what was it the Christian died? He died to his *old self*, to all that he had been, whether as Jew or Gentile, before he became a Christian. To what did he rise again? Clearly to that *new life* to which the Christian was bound over. And in this spiritual death and resurrection the great moving factor was that one fundamental principle of union with Christ, identification of will with Him. It was this which enabled the Christian to make his parting with the past and embracing new obligations real."[1]

[1] *Epistle to Romans* (Sanday), p. 163.

In another passage (Gal. iii. 27, 28) we have the whole three conceptions brought together. There is the new self, "As many of you as were baptized have put on Christ." There is entrance into Christ, "baptized into Christ"; and there is entrance into the brotherhood of believers, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

The ordinance of Baptism further had two uses, the one appeared when it was being administered; the other when it began to form a kind of standing reminder of the ideal life to which it pointed. The Apostle Paul employs it in the latter way in both the passages which have just been quoted. "*Know ye not*, that so many of you as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" I bring the ideal which was presented to you at your baptism once more before you. It remains to tell you that any act of personal impurity, of unbrotherliness, or lack of charity; any act of disloyalty to Christ, is a breaking of your baptismal vows. Baptism therefore, when undergone in a believing spirit, indicates entrance into possession of our true self, of our brethren, and of God in Christ Jesus. As such it is a rite of real and beautiful significance.

The Lord's Supper. Here again the three great realities which are always with us are brought under our notice. The ordinance points to the self we are to love. "Prepare ye the guestchamber where I may sup with My disciples," this is what Jesus is saying to us when He invites us to His table. There is personal preparation to be made before partaking of the sacred symbols. "Let a man examine himself, prove himself,"[1] "ascertain by sufficient tests what his state of feeling is with regard to the death of Christ, and how far this feeling is evinced in his daily life." And not only is the self to be proved before celebration, but the sacrament is itself a means of personal grace, helping a man to realize his need, and his true position in the sight of God and man, and furnishing a glimpse of the true and purified self that he is to live.

The Lord's Supper seeks to bring us into vital relationship with others. It means communion. The symbols themselves teach the unity of believers. "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."[2] There is one table here, all are on a level. All classes, ranks, conditions, meet on terms of absolute equality. In this ordinance, as in Baptism, there

[1] Δοκιμαζέτω δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἑαυτον (1 Corinthians xi. 28).

[2] 1 Corinthians x. 17.

is exemplified in a real and practical fashion the glorious fact that there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus.

In the ancient world the act of eating together was regarded as the outstanding method of expressing, maintaining, and rectifying relations of friendship. The common meal, partaken of in the name and in the presence of their Lord, must have done more than we can tell towards uniting the different sections of believers with a close and lasting bond.

It holds before us also the need and sweetness of close fellowship with Christ. It is the Lord's Supper. He is the Host, His is the body, the symbol of which is broken and distributed; His is the blood represented in the red wine of the sacramental cup; He is the central figure, the object of adoring love throughout. He who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, is magnified in the Feast, and His past mercies and future splendour made the theme of silent meditation and sounding praise. "Do this," He says, "in remembrance of Me," and lo! we stand before the cross of Calvary and hear Him cry, "It is finished." "Do this," He says, "till I come," and there appear before our enraptured eyes the blessings of the second advent,

when He shall come again in power and great glory; whilst all the time the thought of the ever-present Lord thrills and elevates the soul.

Where shall we learn more quickly to obey the great double commandment, on which hang all the law and the prophets, than when with penitent and believing hearts we enter His banqueting house with the banner over us Love, and meet our common Lord and our brethren beloved at the sacred feast?

In this ordinance, too, it is made clear that the three spheres are one. There must be personal cleansing and personal longing after righteousness; there must be the love of the brethren; there must be loyalty to Christ. Where any of these is wanting the rite loses its full significance. And the abuses of this ordinance which have crept into the Church will be found to consist in the obscuration of one or other of them.

Thus, the Eucharist has been regarded almost exclusively as a means of exalting Christ in His Cross and Passion, and scarcely if at all as a means of uniting man to man. The sacrifice of the mass, the elevation of the Host, the denial of the cup to the laity, such practices cannot but be looked upon as concealing the real import of the ordinance. If the brotherhood of believers and the universal priest-

hood of Christians should be made evident anywhere, it ought surely to be in this Communion Service.

There is a danger in our Protestant communities lest, in our revulsion against what we call these idolatrous practices and priestly assumptions, our sense of reverence for the ordinance should be weakened. The comparison of the Christian Communion Service to a club dinner,[1] for example, is an unfortunate one. Not to mention the altogether earthly associations which the comparison suggests, there is left out of consideration the overshadowing influence of the Master. It is not enough to say that Jesus is a member of the festal band which gathers round the Communion table. We must believe in the Real Presence as far as to feel that it is that presence which makes the Feast. Jesus is not there like any of the other participants. He is the atmosphere, as it were, which all breathe, the centre around which all their beliefs and hopes and aims revolve.

It is to be deplored that more causes of contention and strife have been discovered in connection with this ordinance than perhaps in any other department of Christian thought and practice. Did our Lord foresee the tumult when He prayed so earnestly at the first Lord's Supper for unity? Such unity

[1] *Ecce Homo*, p. 163.

can only be attained by those who call themselves Christians remembering the three-fold function of the ordinance, and earnestly seeking to use it for the glory of the Master, for their own good, and as a means of helping towards a better common understanding and common feeling.

The *Doctrine of the last things.* In pursuance of our object we wish, in mentioning this vast and difficult subject, to touch upon one thing only, and that is the place which, according to the New Testament, the personal element occupies in the determination of a man's future. The main passage in this connection is the closing verses of the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. It may be thought that we are not able to separate wholly parable and picture from reality; but it is not necessary to do so in order to perceive the great principle according to which men are judged.

The first thing we note in reading the passage, is the remarkable omissions that occur in the charges that are made against "those on the left hand." There is nothing said, as we have already seen, about open and palpable sins; it is the sin of omission that is adduced. But what is still more remarkable with regard to this is, that there is no reference made to the omission of spiritual exercises. There is no reference to neglect of what

is usually called the means of grace, such as prayer, reading the Bible, sitting down at the Lord's table. Nor is there a single word about false doctrine. The things to which the Church for long centuries has attached supreme importance, her so-called damnable heresies, are entirely absent in the verdict of condemnation. Her mortal sins are not so much as named.

On the other hand, the thing which, in her trials for heresy, in her cases of discipline, in her discussions in court, and convocation, and council, and assembly, in her creeds, and confessions, and dogmas, has seldom or never been touched upon, is the one thing the Judge fixes upon as the basis of condemnation. Compare the hell to which the Church has sent her defaulters with the "everlasting punishment" to which the "goats" are consigned in this chapter. They have absolutely nothing in common. The one represents punishment for what were regarded as heretical opinions, the other is the reward of inhumanity; the one is composed of men and women who did not happen to agree with certain doctrinal views, aye, and sometimes of infants who, because God was thought to have decreed their damnation from all eternity, or because their parents had refused or neglected to have a certain rite administered to them, were hurled

remorselessly into the blazing abyss; the other comprises those persons who, with the opportunities presented to them, did not show towards their fellows the spirit of unselfish, active, benevolent love. Read what the creeds and confessions contain upon the question; read, say, the Athanasian Creed line by line, with these verses in Matthew's Gospel. Which is to be taken as the standard by which we are to decide the question as to who is to "perish everlastingly";—this denunciatory instrument which breathes not a syllable about man's moral relationships and duties, but makes intellectual belief in a certain form of a particularly difficult doctrine concerning the nature of God the test; or these words of Jesus which make no mention of anything but the fact that men have in their time of probation not given to their neighbours a helping hand in their hour of need?

I would not press too hard the omissions in this scene. It was not intended by Jesus to be an exhaustive account of the matter. But one cannot fail to note the unique prominence that is given to the keeping of Christ's new commandment as a factor in the deciding of the fate of men, and contrast it with the total silence of the creeds, and the inaction of the Church on the point.

It is to be noted, however, that it is not mere

morality that is regarded as the requirement for "life eternal." It is the attitude towards men that is the outcome of personal devotion to Christ. It is the two commandments in operation, the first and greatest being brought into the foreground, but the second being "like unto it." Jesus sees them working together, and He shows them to be one in the hearts and lives of men in the words, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me"; "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me."[1]

The references to the judgment which are found in the epistles point to personal and practical matters, and not to those which are abstract or doctrinal. It is the personal attitude of the individual to Christ, or of man to man, that is to decide his fate, not his opinions or views on theological questions. Nor is there any attempt at dogmatizing on the future of men. All that is said even of Judas the betrayer of Jesus is that "he went to his own place." "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."[2] "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he

[1] Matt. xxv. 40, 45. [2] Romans xiv. 10.

standeth or falleth." Each believer is responsible to Christ and to Him only. There is therefore no place for uncharitable judgments or censorious exclusiveness between man and man.

Would it not be a salutary thing to have Christ's judgment-seat set up in our midst, instead of our own? Would it not be well to refrain, at His repeated request, from attempting to pronounce judgment upon others? All this sending of men to hell, because they happen to differ from the anathematizer in opinion, whether it be by the coarse, vulgar man of the street, who bluntly consigns you to the *inferno*, or by the reverend father in God, who puts a cap on his head and a staff in his hand, and does the same thing in stately theological language, and under what he wishes us to believe is the highest heavenly authority, is unscriptural, demoralizing, bad. There is very little to choose between the two. There are times when, in view of the scandals of Church history, one feels less aversion to the brutal oath of the vagabond than to the anathema of the polished ecclesiastic.

The *Doctrine of Immortality*. It is in the keeping of the double commandment that we obtain the only satisfying evidence for immortality. We cannot reach this truth by the mere logic of the understanding. We cannot think it out after an abstract

fashion. We can only 'trust' or 'love' our way into it, if the expression may be allowed. The man who joins himself by faith and love to the eternal God, to his brethren, and to his own real self, has, in these communings with the Divine, in these intimacies of pure friendship, in these quickenings of his better part, the witness in himself that he shall live for ever. Love will not limit itself to time. It cannot bound itself by little earthly horizons. Sweet memories become fond anticipations, the yearning for "the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still," becomes prophetic of the future, and speaks of a reunion that shall know no break for evermore.

And so it will be found that belief in immortality is ever closely associated with the reign of love, with the dominance of that fellowship which binds the soul to the Father and to the brethren. It is strong or weak, steady or fluctuating, just in the degree in which the heart is rooted in the great verities which the two-fold law unfolds.

Love alone knows itself to be immortal. It cannot believe in extinction. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."[1] Know, not with the barren credence of the under-

[1] John xvii. 3.

standing, but with the clinging passion of the heart. "And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."[1]

Résumé. Gathering the threads of our argument together, we have seen that all religion and morality are in the final issue summed up in the keeping of that double commandment which Christ emphatically endorsed on more than one occasion. We have seen that the three spheres to which that commandment points are interwoven, interlocked in such a vital and necessary way, that a man cannot perform his duties in any one of them without at the same time performing them in all.

There is no place, for example, for any idea of self-culture which may imply the culture of self at the expense of others, or even in a state of indifference towards others. Such a conception is not only unchristian, irreligious; it is irrational, impracticable. Any attempt at isolated action must lead to one-sidedness or barrenness.

Nor, again, can there be such a thing as a true service of man which leaves out the thought of God. The very idea of 'service,' given spontaneously and without thought of reward; and of 'man,' meaning any man, no matter who he is, are creations of the particular way of viewing life which is held

[1] 1 John iv. 21.

before us in the double commandment, and these ideas can only be kept in a vital condition by continuing to maintain the two parts of the law in their essential relations to each other. Lose sight of God, and you lose sight of man, and of your duty towards him ; and, conversely, drop man out of your reckoning, and the true idea of God disappears at the same moment.

We have seen that all this receives its perfect exemplification in the teaching, life, sufferings, and death of Jesus Christ. His was the ideal life, because it was finely adjusted to every part of its environment. The whole Being of God and the whole nature of man lay before Him, and He went in and out and found pasture.

His relation to God was intimate, sweet, unbroken. There never came between Him and the Father even the faintest cloud of doubt or misunderstanding. The prayerfulness of Christ is one of the most notable features of His character. And His prayers were intimate communings, appropriations of the divine nature in which His Spirit entered into the divine Spirit and took possession of its riches.

His relation to men, again, was the finest conceivable. He is Himself the perfect Fulfiller of His own new commandment. Love to man as man is shown in all His words and deeds. " He set the

first and greatest example of a life wholly governed and guided by the passion of humanity."[1] He not only loved His neighbour *as Himself*, but with an affection that swept self out of sight, and led Him to give Himself up for our sakes to a cruel and shameful death.

And the personality which was developed by this perfect correspondence with its environment was such as the world had never seen. It was unique. Regard it negatively, "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Look at it in its positive aspect; it was full to overflowing with zeal and energy for all that is high and holy, for things that are lovely and of good report. His biography was summed up in the words, "He went about doing good."

And you have in Him that interpenetration of the three spheres of which we have spoken. For whilst His activity in each may, by an effort of thought, be contemplated by itself, all are interwoven into perfect oneness. We men are found discussing as to whether the true end of life is to be found in self-culture, or in the service of God, or in the service of man. In Christ these three are one.

And Jesus is not only Pattern but Power. This larger, nobler life He has made possible to every man through His cross, and through His Spirit

[1] *Ecce Homo*, p. 177.

working in us. The gospel of the grace of God is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. The power to 'salvation' in its deeper, broader, grander significance, as meaning not simply rescue from the guilt, and dominion, and consequences of sin, but also entrance into possession of the wealth that lies in the vast regions represented by the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. The saved man is the whole man, the man who is growing up to Christ *in all things*, who is showing an all-round development in head and heart, and will, and life; in thought and word and deed. And it is ours as Christians to cast ourselves with the full assurance of that faith which worketh by love on Him who has died for us and rose again, that this perfect salvation may be completed in us.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

THE last thing that remains for us to do is to look around, from the vantage ground we have gained, on the state of things that has prevailed in what has called itself the Christian religion. The course which has been followed should have furnished us with eyes fitted to scrutinize the nature and fruit of Christianity in the past, and to test its position in the present.

Let us glance, in the light of what has gone before in this treatise, first of all at the *history of Christianity*.

If our description of the essence of Christianity is a true one, then we shall discover that there is very little of its history to record. There is a long troubled story of what calls itself the Christian Church; but this is in great part a narrative, not of the working out in holy and beautiful lives of the

principles of His religion, as Jesus Himself taught them, but of principles which are the direct reverse of everything He said or did. It was laid down by Him as a fundamental law of His kingdom that men should not strive for mastery over their fellows. He rebuked this spirit again and again, when He saw it in His disciples. But the greater part of the long period from the second to the sixteenth century was consumed by the leaders of the Church in struggles for ecclesiastical precedence and power. It was a fundamental rule with Him that each of His disciples should stand in a direct personal relation to Himself; He resented quickly and hotly any attempt at interference with this relationship. But the history of the Church has largely consisted in the attempts made by one set of disciples to come between some other set and their common Master, and to dictate to them what they should believe concerning Him, and how they should act towards Him, and to deal with them in accordance with the manner in which they met their views. This action has not been confined to hierarchical churches; it has shown itself in other communities, and under the influence of public opinion, or a 'sough' of orthodoxy, has visited pains and penalties on those who ventured to take their theology direct from the Master.

The things that are most alien to 'Christ's Christianism' are strife, hatred, uncharitableness, schism, greed, selfishness, love of money, love of power. But these are the very things that Church history is full of, so much so that were you to leave out of it the stormy intrigues for place and rule, the endless bickerings over points of doctrine or of ecclesiastical procedure, the heresy hunts, the heart-burnings due to attempts at personal or Church aggrandizement and enrichment, you would not at certain ages have much left. When therefore men point to this history, and cry—See what your Christianity has produced! we reply—Nay, see rather how men have misunderstood and misapplied its chief tenets. The only history of Christianity which can be acknowledged is the history, not of the attempts of men to override and overrule and overreach their fellows, to dictate their beliefs, to punish them when they failed to agree with them; not the history of interminable discussions and disputes respecting the nature of God and His relation to the other members of the Trinity, or regarding the nature and use of rites and ordinances; but the history of the effort to keep the great commandment; the effort to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. There is a golden thread of such lives running through the dark warp of baser

material. It consists of men and women who are seeking to fashion themselves after the image of Jesus. They do not bulk largely in the record. Their lives are mostly untold. They die unhonoured and unsung. But it is in them that the true story of the Christian religion is to be read.

Or looking at the history of Christianity from another point of view, we are continually being struck with the failure to maintain the proportion of the "truth as it is in Jesus." In every age of the Church it will be found that one or other of the claims of religion has received special prominence, while the rest have not obtained their due share of attention.

There have been times, for example, in which attention has been almost exclusively confined to the doctrine of God. In these periods some dogma such as that of the Divine Sovereignty has been taken up, and man has been forced to rise out of all his earthly relationships till he faced the Supreme Being. He has been lifted out of the region of every-day life, and carried into a world constructed by the aid of theological propositions, where he has been made to think and feel under their exclusive influence. In this way a sharp line is drawn between duties: some are placed on one side as duties to God, some on the other as duties to man.

Now, as soon as you draw such a line certain views inevitably arise. They are such as these: That there are two distinct kinds of obligation, a divine and a human;—that in neglecting the human for the sake of the divine there can be no sin; what is more,—that the divine, being infinitely the more important of the two, the more completely you withdraw your thoughts and energies from the human and concentrate them on the divine the holier you become. Hence a man obtained a reputation for sanctity in proportion to the extent to which he was able to withdraw himself from the haunts of men. The hermit, the anchorite, the pillar saint, who were supposed to have given up all human relationships in their absorption in the contemplation of divine realities, were those who were held in highest reputation in the sphere of religion.

But this idea led further. The interests of God are supreme. They must be attended to first of all and above all. He must be glorified; His service must be made magnificent. His servants must be honoured. Hence the rise of that spirit of Church aggrandisement, at all hazards and by all methods, which is so marked a feature of mediaeval history. Whatever suffers, the service of God must not. And so men are taxed, oppressed, ground down, to fill the

coffers of the Church, and to maintain a grand hierarchy; and you have the spectacle of the full-fed ecclesiastic serving in proud cathedrals, whilst there nestle round these gorgeous edifices the miserable hovels of the poor wretches who have been robbed to keep up the elaborate ritual.

To-day we find that the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme. The first reverence is in some quarters being almost wholly neglected. We have passed, it is said, beyond the theological and metaphysical stages, and have reached the positive, in which, the heavens being cleared of the gods, and the mind of man of metaphysical abstractions, we deal with facts which are patent to all, and devote ourselves to the only rational cult, the worship of humanity. And so we have proclaimed in our ears the new evangel of the service of man that is to take the place of the old service of God, and save the world.

These two movements represent the two extremes between which the mind of man has oscillated. Betwixt them there come in manifold phases of thought and action. History hardly ever shows them in their proper relations to one another. If there is to be a new moral and social revolution it will not be accomplished by discarding either the one or the other, but by causing the love and

service of God and man to "march breast forward" with linked hands. "On these two hang all the law and the prophets."

It is in the light of the position we have gained that the practice of the members of the Church in the matter of *Heresy* is to be judged. The word 'heresy' conveys to the minds of most people only one idea. It means false doctrine and, more especially, some purely theological view which is regarded as unsound by the party in the Church which is dominant at the time. Heresy, as commonly understood, has nothing to do with persons, with the relation of man to man; nor has it to do with the attitude of a man's spirit to God. It has reference to metaphysical ideas which, in many cases, change with the shifting or growing opinions of the ages. There is little firm ground to be discovered in this region. The heretic of one generation may be the orthodox man of the next, and the saint of the third. The children of those who murder the heretic build his tomb, and sit at his feet as his disciples.

Again, the lives of men, their disposition, their conduct, their character, has had no bearing whatever on the matter. Those who were supposed to cherish false doctrine might be living lives of the purest and loftiest kind; but if they differed in the smallest

degree from the prevailing creed, or from some one tenet of it, or even from some particular interpretation of a single point in it, they were visited with the anathema of the Church. On the other hand, if a man would only fall in with the temporarily accepted manner of expressing certain abstruse doctrines, though his character and life could not bear inspection, though his relation to his fellowmen in business, in society, in the home circle, were imperfect, or even scandalously bad, he retained his place in the Church, and might even be looked up to, because of the soundness of his views, as one of its pillars.

This manner of regarding error in religious circles has given the enemy abundant occasion to blaspheme, and has furnished him with some of his keenest weapons against Christianity. But it is not the religion of Jesus that is in question here, but the travesty of it, which was brought in when, as Coleridge says, "the *true and first apostasy*" was introduced, and "in council and synod the Divine humanities of the Gospels gave way to speculative systems, and Religion became a science of shadows under the name of Theology, or at the best a bare skeleton of Truth, without life or interest, alike inaccessible and unintelligible to the majority of Christians."[1] The great word of true

[1] *Aids to Reflection*, p. 157.

Christianity is not—Thou shalt order thy thoughts correctly in view of certain metaphysico-theological conceptions; but thou shalt love so wisely and well as to get into proper relations with God, neighbour, self.[1]

And as we should learn to express the substance of Christianity in terms of love to God and man; so should we learn to interpret all departures from it. According to this formula, uncleanness, implacability, irreverence, the defiling in any way of that which Paul calls "the temple of the Holy Ghost," the

[1] "Meantime, I wish to remind you that one of St. Paul's favourite notions of heresy is, 'a doting about strifes of words.' One side may be right in such a strife and the other wrong, but both are heretical as to Christianity, because they lead men's minds away from the love of God and of Christ, to questions essentially tempting to the intellect, and which tend to no profit towards godliness. And again, I think, you will find that all the 'false doctrines' spoken of by the apostles are doctrines of sheer wickedness; that their counterpart in modern times is to be found in the Anabaptists of Münster, or the Fifth Monarchy Men, or in mere secular High Churchmen, or hypocritical Evangelists—in those who make Christianity minister to lust, or to covetousness, or to ambition; not in those who interpret Scripture to the best of their conscience and ability, be their interpretation ever so erroneous. . . . I would join with all those who love Christ and pray to Him; who regard Him not as dead but living. . . . There is one anathema, which is indeed holy and just, and most profitable for ourselves as well as for others (1 Cor. xvi. 22), but this is not the anathema of a fond theology."—*Life of Dr. Arnold* (Stanley), I. 315-17.

refusal to establish and maintain relations of amity and love with our fellowmen, the attempt to invade the sacredness of their personality, to rob them of what they regard as of value—these, more than the transgression of theological canons, are the heresies for which we are judged.

If the Church had followed Christ's example and teaching, that large portion of the history of the Church which deals with reputed heresies, and which is one of the most painful and one of the most pitiful series of blunders and crimes on record, containing as it does numberless foolish and cruel and shameful deeds, would never have been written. And many new chapters relating to the establishment of the ties of Christian brotherhood would have taken its place.

We should look at the matter in the presence of the Master. We shall find that there the different parties in many a heresy hunt will need to change places. That

> "It is an heretic that makes the fire,
> Not she that burns in it."

We should put in the place of the heresy of the theologian, the creedmonger, the dogmatist, the heresy of Jesus and of the New Testament. That which is "contrary to sound doctrine," according to Paul, is lawlessness, disobedience, ungodliness, un-

holiness, profanity, murder, whoremongery, moral defilement, thieving, lying, perjury.[1]

In fine, the heretic of the Church is unknown to the New Testament, and the heretic of the New Testament is unknown to the Church. It will be an edifying spectacle when the heresy which is hunted down in the Church comes to be of the kind that the prophets thunder against in their denunciations of the men of their times; that Jesus denounces as He pours the vials of His wrath on the Pharisees, or that Paul anathematizes in his epistles; the heresies of lawlessness, of malice, and all uncharitableness, the heresy of breaking Christ's new commandment, that ye love one another, by men who profess to love and serve Him.

It is only fair to demand that what are called *Attacks on Christianity* should be examined in the light of Jesus enunciating the two-fold command of love to God and love to man. We take it too readily for granted that every attack on what goes by the name of Christianity exhibits hostility to Christianity as such, that is, as Christ taught it. This is not always the case. Nay, we are inclined to ask, Is it ever the case? Does any one know of a serious and well-sustained attack that has been made by a thoughtful, high-minded man (and we

[1] 1 Tim. i. 9-11.

are concerned only with such) on the religion of Jesus Christ.

When we hear of attacks on Christianity, when we speak of the sceptic, the infidel, the opponent of the faith, there are certain questions which should always be asked. They are such as these:—In what period of the Church's history did these individuals appear? What was the form that the Church's doctrinal system assumed at the time? What kind of lives did the exponents of the Christianity of the day live, especially those in power in the Church? We are to remember that nothing has been subjected to such multiform and gross perversions as what is called Christianity. The so-called Church of Christ has often represented anything but His image. There have been doctrines preached and courses of conduct advocated of such a nature that a man's sense of honour and righteousness made him an infidel to them; so that in the course of history the sceptic has often been, in regard to the essence of Christianity, nearer Christ than the religious professor. It was a Christlike thing, in some instances, for men to stand outside the Church, and declare against the things which she commended.

And so, before we condemn a man for his opposition to Christianity, let us be careful to inquire as

to the manner in which the religion of Jesus was represented at the time. When Faust was asked, why he was not religious, he answered, from religiousness; and if some men had been asked in certain corrupt periods of the Church's history, why they not only did not profess Christianity but took up an antagonistic attitude towards it, they would have replied, from our adherence to Christ.

Many of the attacks that are made to-day on Christianity are, as we have seen, wholly beside the mark. It is not Christianity that is attacked at all, but some ecclesiastical or dogmatical formulating and manipulating of it. Those who make the onslaught have either mistaken its accidents for its essence, or have seized on the inconsistencies and frailties of its professors, instead of tracing it up to its pure source, and looking at it as it was taught, and, above all, as it was lived by its great Founder.

It is not by certain doctrines formulated by men; it is not by the practice of the Church of Christ; it is not by any institution or body of men, however venerable, that the religion of Christ is to be judged. The question is, "What think ye of Christ?" and of Christ uttering and enforcing the two-fold commandment? What think ye of the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness,

goodness, faith, meekness, self-control? What think ye of the new ideal, and of the new creation, and of the new beauty and power of a manhood that is growing up unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ in all things?

There never have been attacks made on these conceptions. Persons outside the Church have attacked certain of its dogmas or institutions, or forms or practices. But these, having been formed after the traditions of men, might perish, and real Christianity not only remain unharmed, but be really benefited. Within the pale of the Church Christians have attacked one another, Protestant and Catholic, Churchman and Dissenter, Rationalist and Pietist, have ranged themselves in opposite camps, and have dealt trenchantly with each other's positions. Or within the same camp the battle has been continued, and High Churchman has attacked Low Churchman, or Low Churchman High Churchman, Calvinist has attacked Arminian, or Arminian, Calvinist. There have been pitched battles on great occasions between powerful parties in the Church, and a kind of continuous guerilla warfare going on all the time over this or that point of faith or practice. But on that which we have seen to be the essence of the Christian religion, there has not been any serious onslaught. Nobody wants to doubt or deny its glorious standards

and ideals. There may be infidels to the machinery of ecclesiasticism, to the narrowness and bigotry, to the inconsistent lives, the bitterness, the spiteful and jealous rivalries, the mean and petty animosities of professing Christians; there can be none to the Spirit of Jesus Christ, to the goal He sets before us, to the sunshine of His grace working in the heart, and bringing forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

It is in the light of this two-fold commandment of Jesus and of the fruit which it bears that all questions as to the *progress of Christianity* must be answered. Is Christianity developing? Is it spreading? There are those who give an affirmative reply, and there are those who answer in the negative.

Now, before any attempt can be made to solve such queries, we must come to an understanding as to what we mean by Christianity. As we have seen, to some people there can be no Christianity without a certain mode of church government, or certain traditional beliefs about God, or a certain ritual. Should these persons perceive that their particular views are not making progress, or that their doctrines are not being advocated as strenuously as they once were, or that their mode of serving God is not as much in vogue as it used to be, they jump at once to the conclusion that Christianity itself is not advancing.

But the question is not, Has a certain kind of ecclesiastical organization been able to make more people believe in its theological articles? but it is, Has the figure of Christ been coming more to the front? Is His new commandment exercising its beneficent sway over more hearts? Are Christ's ideas of justice, mercy, love, more widely spread? Where the fruit of the Spirit abounds there is Christianity. Where that fruit is wanting, though all the pomp of ceremonial and of correct ecclesiastical procedure be present, there is only the shell and not the kernel of the faith. Where it is present, though much that is spoken of as necessary to salvation is absent, there is the true Christian dispensation.

If this then is what is meant by Christianity, there can be little doubt as to its progress. Take the ethical element, the sense of duty and fidelity and right, the longing to stand in true relationships with one's fellows, it never was stronger than it is to-day. Take the element of humanity. Was there ever a time when the tide of sympathy rose as high as it does at this hour? The poet cries:

> "The nineteenth wave of the ages rolls,
> Now deathward since His life and death;
> Has He fed full men's human souls?
> Has He brought freedom on the earth?
> Or are there less oppressions done
> On the wide world beneath the sun?"

Less oppression done? There never was so much philanthropy in the world. The history of the nineteenth century shows how the currents of love and brotherhood have been broadening and deepening and sweetening. These past sixty years are the most remarkable in history for the rise and growth of humanitarian feeling, and humanitarian legislation, and humanitarian activity. The present Queen's *régime* has been aptly designated a sympathetic reign. It has been one in which human sympathies have been evoked, and educated, and refined to an extent hitherto unknown and undreamt of. To look back to 1837 is almost to transplant ourselves to the ages of barbarism. Women and children have been relieved of oppressions and disabilities which weighed grievously on them; criminals are being treated with humanity; pain and suffering have by skill and tender treatment been marvellously diminished; even animals have shared in the genial glow that has spread over all classes of the community.

True, this change is supposed by sceptics of the positive school to be synchronous with the decay of Christianity. And it is confidently affirmed that the hope of the future complete amelioration of the condition of the human race lies in "the general disappearance of Christianity from among the more

advanced populations of the globe"[1] which, it is sufficiently obvious, is about to take place at a time not very distant. It is safest not to prophesy until you know, and we are reminded of many a similar forecast made with equal confidence in days gone bye. Meanwhile, the real features of Christianity have come forth into a prominence which they have not had since the days of the apostles. The two have advanced together, the ethical principles of the Christian religion (the altruism of the New Testament), and the altruism of the ninteenth century. Is this only an accident? Is there absolutely no connection between them? If sympathy for man be one of the outstanding features of Christ's teaching, and one of the chief characteristics of His nature, and if this is at last being recognized and asserting its supremacy over other things under which it has too long been buried, instead of regarding Christianity as becoming effete, we ought to think of it as having the finest opportunity it has had since Christ Himself went about doing good, to do its own true work.

There may be many things which men have closely associated with Christianity which are ready to vanish away. But these things are no more Christianity than the old bottles are the wine. "The

[1] *Service of Man* (Morison), p. 242.

Christian religion is not dead, the soul of it is alive for evermore, and only the dead and rotting body of it is now getting burial."[1] What may we not expect when Love, the greatest force in the universe, Love in its purest, strongest form, inspired and directed by the infinite Love of God, shall take the place in the thought and feeling of the Church which Belief, in the sense of barren intellectual assent to metaphysico-theological tenets—a faith that works by logic and not by love—has so long occupied; and when the evolution of a pure and loving and symmetrically proportioned manhood, shaped and inspired by the indwelling power of the Spirit of God, shall take the place of attention to the mere form of a church's government, or the changing externals of worship, or the intellectual cognition and adjustment of doctrinal formulae?

The question, Which is *the true Church*? has never yet been fully answered in the light of Jesus enunciating the great two-fold commandment. The test has been now one thing, now another. It has been apostolic succession, orders, ritual, an orthodox creed, and what not. The Church has never yet said boldly, "The greatest is love"; "Every one that loveth is born of God"; the Royal law is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as

[1] *Miscellaneous Essays* (Carlyle), Vol. VII., p. 224.

thyself," and put itself forward to be judged by this standard.

The truest Church is that which produces most of the love principle. "By their fruits," says Jesus, "ye shall know them": not by their implements, the shape of their theological pruning-hooks, the pedigree of their vine-dressers, the rules of cultivation which they follow, but by their fruits. And the fruits of the Spirit we know. They consist mainly of qualities which are exercised in living touch with God and with our fellowmen. We find ourselves as we name them in a human and ethical, rather than in an ecclesiastical and doctrinal atmosphere, whilst there underlie them the great facts and forces of the Christian faith.

We have seen how near to the heart of Jesus was the *unity of His disciples.* "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." Alas! it is the opposite of all this that the Church has shown to the world. It is the strangest and most melancholy of sights to behold an institution, presided over by one who is called the Prince of Peace, so torn asunder by quarrels, so rent by dissensions and strifes. The Church wonders that the world does not believe that God has sent Christ to them. She has failed to furnish the out-

standing proof. The marvel is that Christianity has made the progress it has done under such circumstances.

If these disputes had arisen through the proclamation of the central truths of Christianity, one might have sorrowfully granted their necessity. But in most cases the heat has been engendered over matters with which Christianity "according to Christ Jesus" has little or nothing to do. Half of them have been disputes about words, many of them about the verbal setting of some minor doctrine; the other half about outward organizations, administrations, methods, which might have taken either of the forms over which the trouble arose, or even no form at all, and no one be any the worse or the better. You look in vain, in the words of Christ Himself or of His apostles, for any reference to the vast majority of the things which created the strife. For the sake of outward forms and ceremonies which to 'Christ's Christianism' are indifferent, men have sacrificed every one of its essential features, and, above all, that love without which all other things are nothing.

Various endeavours to establish a universal concordat have been made, various dreams of union dreamed. There is the effort to unite believers

under credal forms. But as we have seen, creeds have done far more towards splitting up the Church than towards uniting it.

It is not in creeds, say others, that we are to seek for a basis of union, but in common worship. How beautiful it would be, how much it would tend towards real unity if all men were to agree to worship God after the same fashion. Would not this also be a spectacle that would edify the world?

But mere outward uniformity in worship would never in itself accomplish any great spiritual work. It might, indeed, be productive of evil. As "one good custom would corrupt the world," so a perfect uniformity in the externals of religion might lead not to a living unity but to coldness and death. There need be no harm feared from variety in the outward forms of religion. In truth, where there is life variety is not a sign of decadence, but of activity and growth. Is not the highest kind of natural life that in which there is the greatest differentiation, combined with the highest unity? And may not the Christian ideal be of a similar kind?

There is only one direction in which we can look for Christian unity, and that is, in the endeavour under Christ to fulfil His two-fold commandment. There can be no dispute or division amongst true

and thoughtful men as to matters on which hang all the law and the prophets. They are self-evident to every soul that is striving after righteousness and true holiness. To love God and our fellowmen, to be loyal to all obligations, to hold in honour all duties of reverence, devotion, godliness, Christlikeness, fidelity, honesty, truth, purity, courage, self-denial, industry, frugality, regard for justice, mercy, and goodness; there cannot be sects and parties here, there cannot be a multitude of opinions, there cannot be even two men who are at variance with regard to them, unless it be the good man on the one side and the bad man on the other. In order to unity, stress must be laid on spiritual sympathies, moral affections, moral states, moral practices, and not, as has been almost universally the case, on matters of opinion on theoretical questions.

The end of a church is to make men like Christ, and it must give the evolving of the Spirit of Jesus its proper place in its thought and practice. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are venerable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned,

and received, and heard, and seen in me do: *and the God of peace shall be with you.*"[1]

When men are brought face to face with these things they are united. No one thinks of disputing them, no one wants to deny them. The whole nature responds to them. The mind says 'It is true'; the heart, 'It is beautiful'; the conscience, 'It is good, it is right.' They can never be put aside; they must always speak with authority.

At all periods of the Church's history there has been a succession of men and women who have shown forth the fruits and enjoyed the blessings of Christ's Spirit. In their lives, in their devotional tone, in their writings, in their holy and beneficent conversation, in their prayers and in their hymns, they have exhibited a wonderful unity. They form the true apostolic succession; the one holy Catholic Church. No one portion of the Christian community can claim them exclusively. All sections of the Church can boast of some of them; a few belong to no visible Church organization at all. They are the salt and light of the world. They still live:

"In pulses stirred to generosity,
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
For miserable aims that end in self;
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
And with their mild persistence urge men's search to vaster issues."

[1] Philippians iv. 8, 9.

It is the basal elements of such lives alone that can form a bond of real and lasting unity.

Hear, then, the conclusion of the whole matter.

The great ends which the 'Christian Religion' holds before it are the realization of the Divine Ideal of Righteousness; the production of the Fruit of the Spirit; growth to perfect Manhood in Christ Jesus. It is these ends that all Church agencies and ministries and methods should pursue. The one supreme object placed before every created thing, be it vegetable, or animal, or rational, or moral and spiritual, is to develop and bring to perfection all that is in it, so that in turn it may become a blessing to others. And this is the "chief end of man" in Christianity. It is to glorify God in the way in which Christ speaks of where He says, "Herein is my Father glorified, *that ye bear much fruit*";—to glorify Him as the full rich bunches of grapes glorify the skilful vine-dresser.

This perfect realization of our nature is to be reached only in and through Christ Jesus. He shows us in His own life the ideal which is to be made real; and He provides us, through His death and the subsequent pouring out of His Spirit, with the requisite means of its realization.

Through Him we have boldness and access to

all the fulness of God; to the whole of humanity, and, in this way, to the grandest environment for the full expansion and enrichment of the individual soul.

But for this goal to be reached there must be the absolute surrender of all that we are, and of all that we have, to Him as Saviour and as Lord. We must become Christians in deed, and in truth, no longer our own, but Christ's close followers, for Him to rule and mould as seems best to Him. The old self is to pass out of sight, and in its place there is to arise the "Not I," but Christ dwelling in me, which is "the hope of glory."

Such is Christianity—the absolute religion! Has it served its day? Can a system which in its every part tends towards such a glorious consummation ever become effete or be superseded? This or that particular formulization of doctrine; this or that method of conducting the Church's affairs; this or that arrangement of ecclesiastical machinery may pass away. But as for pure Christianity, as Christ taught it, not only is it showing no indication of being relegated to the limbo of outworn religious systems, it is exhibiting such signs of renewal of strength as begets us again to a lively hope. Christianity is about to enter upon a new career

of conquest. It is about to take up anew the task which was assigned it by the Master, when He sent forth His disciples to preach the gospel of the glory of God, to echo far and near His great watchword Love, and to call upon men to stand fast in the liberty wherewith He had made them free.

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